

PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second-Class Matter February 10, 1913, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under act of March 3, 1879. Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1913, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 168 West 23d St., New York.

No. 789.

NEW YORK, JULY 16, 1913.

Price 5 Cents.

ON THE SQUARE

—OR—

THE ONLY WAY TO WIN

By ALLAN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.

ON THE SQUARE.

"So you refuse to obey orders, do you, Dick Lane?" asked Julius Stromberg, the grocer, angrily frowning his boy clerk. "Do you know what that means?"

"I cannot help it, sir," replied Dick, very quietly, but firmly. "Discharge me if you will; but I cannot be dishonest."

"What, you young huffy!" cried the burly grocer, threateningly. "Do you mean to say that I am dishonest!"

"I make no accusations against you, sir; but when you instruct me to cheat in weights and measures, I must refuse, for I would consider myself guilty of a dishonest act if I obeyed."

"You whipper-snapper! Don't I hire you to obey orders?"

"Yes, sir; but not to cheat," replied Dick, resolutely.

"Then you refuse to obey my instructions?"

"You instruct me to shorten the quantity in weighing and measuring, do you not?" asked Dick, quietly.

"Why, you young soft-head, that's the common practice in all stores. Profits are small enough in groceries, and the matter of an ounce in the pound or a gill in the quart is never known or noticed by the customers, and does them thereby no harm, while it helps the grocer to pay his honest debts."

Dick Lane stepped down from behind the counter. He looked Stromberg fairly in the eye.

"Is it necessary to cheat your customers of their rightful quantity to pay your debts?" he asked.

"Why, that's not cheating," declared Stromberg. "It is simply a little sharpness in trade. Every business man has to be smart and sharp and shrewd. Honesty in the main is all right; but it is the license of all tradesmen to take advantage in insignificant ways where they can."

"I prefer not to do that," replied Dick. "My sense of right and wrong forbids it. To be honest means to be exact. I shall be glad to continue in your employ with the right to give honest weights and measures."

"You are a fool. That was just like your father, and he failed in business," said Stromberg, angrily. "You'll never succeed, for there is no business instinct in you. Dick Lane, I have tried to do well by you and make a smart man of you, but I see the folly of my efforts. Do you refuse to follow my instructions?"

"They are not right."

"Pshaw! What is the use of being squeamish? The customers never know it and never kick. It's trade, I tell you."

"Wait a moment, Mr. Stromberg," said Dick, quietly. "Let's look at the matter in another light. You say no harm is done by cheating your customers in a small way because they never know it. Now, how would you like it if your clerk was to quietly and unknown to you abstract a few pennies at a time from your till, or make false entries on your books? Would there be no harm in it because you did not know it?"

Stromberg's face grew purple.

"That would be stealing," he gritted.

"The principle is the same in one case as the other," replied Dick. "You cannot deny that."

Stromberg knew that Dick was right. But his nature was harsh and stubborn. His face grew very red and choleric.

"I guess you have worked here long enough, Dick Lane," he said, thickly. "Step up to the desk and get your pay. You are discharged."

Dick laid down his apron and put on his coat. He walked quietly up to the desk and was paid off. Then he walked out of the store.

Out into the bright free air of the open world. In this act he had been faithful to his conscience and his honor, but he had once more cast in his lot with the great army of the unemployed.

He saw the sunny, bright street of the little town of Benham before him. The birds were singing in the branches of the shading trees and the little thoroughfare was all life and excitement with people and passing vehicles.

But a chill was on Dick's spirits, an oppressive weight on his chest. He was once more out for himself, a homeless wanderer, and unaware of what the future might hold in store.

Dick was an orphan boy.

His father had been a small business man in Benham. He had never achieved great success, but he had left behind him an unstained name and a reputation for integrity and moral worth.

This was Dick's heritage. He was "Ben Lane's boy," and everybody believed in his honesty and character. With this alone for capital Dick saw his father laid beside his mother in the little village churchyard and started out penniless to face the world.

It was not difficult for him to find employment first in the little grocery of Julius Stromberg. But the result of this we have already seen.

Dick sauntered down the street until he came to the door of the village smithy. The ring of the anvil and clang of the hammer rose and fell upon the air.

"Hello, my boy!" cried big Bill Stokes, the smith, as he turned a horseshoe deftly. "Are ye making holiday?"

"I have been discharged, Mr. Stokes," said Dick, quietly.

"What!" cried Stokes, in surprise. "Couldn't ye hitch with Julius?"

"We did not agree."

The smith looked critically at Dick. Stokes was an old friend of Ben Lane.

"What was wrong?" he asked.

"I would rather not speak of it," replied Dick. "Perhaps I was wrong; but I think I was right."

The smith laid down his hammer. He came nearer to the boy and wiped his smutty hands with his leather apron.

"Look here, lad," he said, earnestly. "You know I'm your friend. Now I can't believe ye were to blame. There's too much of your father in ye. Tell me all about it."

Dick knew that the smith was sincere. He hesitated only a

moment, then he told him the whole affair. Stokes listened with wide-open eyes.

"So that's Stromberg's way of doing business, is it?" he said slowly. "Well, if people all knew that, mighty little business he'd have."

"Perhaps I was wrong in disobeying orders," said Dick.

"Never!" cried the smith, emphatically. "You did just right, Dick Lane, and in time you'll win. Julius Stromberg is wrong. Remember, lad, to be always on the square. It's the only way to win!"

Dick held out his hand.

"'Always on the square,'" he repeated. "'It's the only way to win.' Why, Mr. Stokes, that's a splendid motto."

"Take it, boy, and live up to it," cried the smith. "Remember that Bill Stokes gave it ye, an' never forget it."

Dick held out his hand.

"I will do it," he cried, impulsively. "I am sure it is the very thing my father would wish of me."

"That he would, lad," said the smith, wiping moisture from his eyes.

"That shall be my inspiration," said Dick, earnestly. "I am going out into the world, Mr. Stokes. There is no field for me here in Benham. Whether I succeed or fail, I shall be always on the square."

"Heaven be with ye, lad," said the smith, with emotion. Then they shook hands. Dick went on down the street, while Stokes returned to his forge.

The world was before Dick Lane, just as it has been before many thousands of orphan boys like him. Some have failed and have grown weak by the wayside. But Dick Lane was determined not to be one of these.

He was young and strong and healthy. In school he had been apt in his studies and in athletics a leader.

Physical perfection goes far in the race of life. But without mental attributes it is of little value. Dick had both of these.

He had decided to leave Benham. Of the world outside he knew but little.

Down the street he walked. He had as yet no plan of action formed. He was quite busy trying to evolve something from the chaos of his mind.

He passed by the common where the youths of his acquaintance were engaged in a game of ball. They shouted to him:

"Come on over and play, Dick."

"Pitch the rest of the game for us."

Dick was the crack pitcher of the town, and had helped the boys win many a game of ball. Ordinarily he might have yielded to their request.

But just now other matters of a more serious sort were on his mind, and he declined. But suddenly a tall, fine-looking man stepped forward.

He was Colonel Bond, the richest man in town. Charlie Bond, his son, was captain of the team.

"Dick," said the colonel, "are you not working to-day?"

"No, sir," replied Dick, frankly; "I have been discharged, and am about to leave Benham to seek my fortune."

At this declaration dissenting cries arose from all the boys.

"Leave Benham! Dick Lane leave Benham? No! No! We can't get along without our crack pitcher!"

"What did Mr. Stromberg turn you off for, Dick?" asked the colonel.

"I would rather not say, sir," replied Dick, in a low tone.

"I'll bet it wasn't Dick's fault!" cried Charlie Bond.

"Stromberg is an old cheat, anyway," cried another of the boys. "My mother says he never gives full weight."

Dick's cheeks burned. It was easy for him to see that public sentiment was on his side. It is not to his discredit if he was just a little gratified.

Colonel Bond looked at him closely. A kindly light shone in his eyes.

"So you are going out into the world to seek your fortune, are you, Dick?" he asked, kindly.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "I shall try."

"I do not doubt your ultimate success. But to oblige me, Dick, would you accede to the request of the boys and pitch the game for them to-day? They play the Whitevilles, one of the strongest teams in this region; and I believe with your help they may win the game."

CHAPTER II.

THE ONLY WAY TO WIN.

"I fear you give me too much credit, Colonel Bond," said Dick, modestly. "I should feel bad to disappoint you."

"If we lose the game we shall not blame you," declared Colonel Bond.

"No! No!" cried the boys.

Dick hesitated only a moment. He knew that, after all, one afternoon on the ball field could not greatly abbreviate his chances of a fortune. So he cried:

"Well, all right, boys! I will do the best I can for you."

"Hurrah!" shouted all. "We will beat the Whitevilles."

"You will not be sorry for this, Dick," said Colonel Bond, in a low tone of voice.

All leaped over the fence and went out onto the field to practice. Dick found very speedily that he had not lost his old cunning curves.

He practiced a short while, and then people began to arrive to witness the game.

The Benham people were very much excited. The annual game with Whiteville was the event of the season.

On the benches sat a young girl of about Dick's own age. She was Eva Bond, the daughter of the rich colonel, and the most charming girl in Benham.

She had attended the same school with Dick. He knew her well, but her social position was so much higher than his own that he had been constrained to look upon her as little short of a divinity, and eternally beyond his hopes.

But just now Charlie Bond came hurriedly up to Dick.

"Dick," he said, "Eva wants to speak to you."

Dick gave a start and his face flushed. But he instantly responded to the call. As he approached her she arose from the bench. Her eyes were beaming.

"Oh, Dick!" she cried. "We are all so glad you are going to pitch to-day. We feel sure you will win the game."

"I fear you repose too much confidence in me," said Dick, modestly. "Of course I shall do my best."

"I am very sure you will," said the young girl, with a charming smile. "But papa has just told me that you think of leaving Benham."

Dick bowed almost sadly.

"Yes, Miss Eva," he said. "I feel that it is necessary for me to seek a wider sphere. It is the only way to win."

"We shall miss you very much. But perhaps papa could find a position for you in Benham. Have you set your heart upon going?"

"By no means!" cried Dick, eagerly. "I should be more happy than words can tell never to leave Benham."

The young girl shot a quick glance at him and said:

"I think all will come out right, Dick. Do not lose heart."

"Miss Eva," said Dick, impulsively, "you have always treated me kindly. Of course I am only a poor orphan boy, but some day I shall hope to be a man. Perhaps then I may do you a favor in return."

There was a grave, almost womanly, light in Eva Bond's eyes as she replied:

"I have always felt sure that some day you would become a great man, Dick. Do not disappoint me."

For a moment Dick's bosom swelled and the blood surged through his veins as hot as fire. He almost felt the strength of Atlas, and that he could lift the world upon his shoulders. But he simply said:

"I am very much in earnest, Eva. You have given me great courage."

Just then Colonel Bond came up with his hearty laugh in a jolly manner.

"The Whitevilles have come, Dick," he cried. "They have Scanlan, the professional pitcher. Some of the boys are a bit afraid. Put a little confidence into them."

"Scanlan is a great pitcher," said Dick. "But we must hit him."

"That's the way to talk. Give them a good lecture."

Whiteville was a town of about the size of Benham, on the little river which flowed down to the sea.

Colonel Bond operated the Benham Woolen Mills, and at Whiteville the same sort of a factory was operated by a man named Hamilton Scott.

The two teams were natural rivals, and as a result the two magnates were the same. There was intense rivalry between them. Every year athletic games were played, with varying fortunes.

For the last three seasons Whiteville had ruled in baseball. The reason ascribed for this was that Whiteville had imported a professional pitcher, which was really unfair.

So it can be imagined that interest in the present game was most intense. A large crowd of rooters had come up from Whiteville.

The captain of the Whitevilles was Aubrey Scott, the son of the magnate. He was the rival of Charlie Bond, though he professed friendship, and tried to be particularly sweet on Eva.

But the young girl detested him, and would scarcely heed him. This had aroused the bitterness of Aubrey's nature, and he even went so far as to mutter a threat to one of his special cronies:

"Eva Bond needn't put on so many airs. I'll humble her and bring her to my feet yet."

In some way this remark reached Eva's ears. With what effect can be imagined. As the Whiteville Club came on the field Aubrey rushed up to Eva and greeted her effusively. Meeting with a chilling reception, he grew angry and snappish.

"We will make mincemeat of your team to-day," he bragged. "We've got a star pitcher—Scanlan, of the National League."

"Don't you be too sure," said Eva, boldly. "We've got a good pitcher, also."

Scott looked curious.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"Dick Lane."

"Bab!" cried Scott, contemptuously. "He's no good; We'll bat him out of the box in the first inning!"

These words reached Dick's ears. He turned and looked mildly at Scott, but made no answer just then.

"I'll bet you don't!" cried Charlie Bond, hotly.

"Will you?" sneered Scott. "What'll you bet?"

"I'll bet a new hat that he strikes you out every time you come to bat."

"Me!" exclaimed Scott, incredulously. "You must be daft! I'm the best batter on our nine!"

"Oh, indeed!" said Charlie, with fine sarcasm. "That's saying a good deal!"

"Well, perhaps so," said Scott. "I'll take your wager and show you."

"It's a go!"

With this Scott made his way onto the field. Dick was very quiet and thoughtful. Charlie Bond now called his men to the diamond.

The toss was made and the Benhams went first to bat. Charlie Bond stepped up to the plate and faced Scanlan, the professional pitcher.

"One ball!" called the umpire.

"Two balls!"

The crowd began to murmur. But Scanlan grinned and wiped some dirt on the ball. Then he sent it curving over the plate.

"One strike!"

A little ripple of applause went up from the Whiteville contingent. In another moment the umpire called:

"Two strikes!"

"Three and out!"

Charlie stepped back from the plate with burning face and bitter chagrin. The Whiteville contingent yelled:

"Oh, he's easy!"

"Why don't yer hit him?"

"Strike 'em all out, Scanlan!"

Tommy Flynn went to the plate. Two strikes were almost instantly called on him. How the Whiteville crowd yelled!

Colonel Bond stood beside Dick.

"Looks rather bad, don't it?" he said.

"Oh, the game is not started," said Dick, quietly. "We'll yet hit him, I think."

"I hope so."

At this moment, with two strikes called on him, Tommy made a desperate strike at the ball and missed it. The catcher allowed it to go through his mitt and Tommy sprinted down to first.

"Dick Lane to the bat; Davis on deck!"

A hush fell upon the diamond, unbroken save by the short, sharp adjurations of the coacher at first.

Scanlan poised himself, smiled and then set the ball flying down toward Dick. The orphan boy stood still.

"One strike!" the umpire called.

A great yell went up from the Whiteville people. Young Scott, who played shortstop, cried tauntingly:

"Star player of the Benham team! He's a dandy!"

Dick never even glanced in the direction of the speaker. He glanced down to first base, where Tommy Flynn was playing off. The first ball given him by Scanlan was a good one, but a player generally waits for a man on first to steal second, if possible.

Once again Scanlan sent the ball curving over the plate. Dick struck lightly at it. Tommy Flynn was sprinting down to second. The swinging of the bat disconcerted the catcher and his throw to second was too late. Tommy was safe on second.

"Two strikes!" said the umpire.

The Whiteville contingent yelled.

"Strike him out, Scanlan!"

Colonel Bond leaned forward, all eager excitement. All depended on this one ball. If Dick—but the ball was on its way.

Like a streak of lightning it left the pitcher's hand. It was a straight, swift ball. The first two balls had been out-curves. A straight ball met fairly always goes a good ways. Like a flash Dick's bat moved forward and met it.

Straight over the third baseman's head went the ball. Tommy Flynn was past third before the fielder recovered the sphere. The throw was for home, but he crossed the plate with plenty to spare. Dick rested on third base.

For a moment pandemonium reigned on the ball field. Dick Lane was the hero of the hour. The Benham people cheered him madly. The Whiteville pitcher looked angry and disconcerted. Oppressive silence was on the Whiteville side.

Davis now went to the bat. But, unluckily, he was struck out. The Whiteville people began to pluck up fresh courage. The game was waxing exciting.

CHAPTER III.

DICK SEES PROSPECTS AHEAD.

There was no disputing the fact that the Whiteville pitcher was a star. It did not look as if anybody but Dick Lane on the Benham team could hit him.

But Benham had one run in the first inning. This was a lead, though small, and might win the game.

Colonel Bond was a bit anxious and nervous.

"Dick," he said, "if they began to hit you on curves try a slow ball. I've seen that fool some of the best batters."

"Thank you for the suggestion," said Dick, modestly.

Then he went into the box. The first man at the bat was big Tom Fraser, who was noted as a slugger. Three times big Tom fanned the air. He retired from the plate with a puzzled look.

"Now what do you think of the pitchers' battle?" cried the Benham rooters.

"Oh, that was a fluke!" retorted Whiteville.

But the second man to bat was also puzzled by a queer in-shoot.

Then the self-styled star batter, Aubrey Scott, came to the plate. He glared at Dick and said:

"See if you can fool me, old man!"

Dick by way of reply shot a ball over the plate. Scott made a tremendous drive at it.

"One strike!" called the umpire.

"Two strikes!"

Scott's face was contorted with fury.

"Three strikes and out!"

The angry young captain hurled his bat into the crowd. He could hear the mocking laugh of the Benhamites.

"By Jove, Dick," cried Colonel Bond, "you did do well."

"I did my best," replied the orphan boy, modestly. "I think, however, that I was a bit lucky."

Dick made another hit off Scanlan in the next inning, but three men struck out and he could not score. Then Dick held the Whitevilles down for the other half of the inning.

Thus matters were at the end of the seventh inning. Only one run, and that to the credit of the Benham team. It was a wonderful game of ball.

The Whiteville people were very sober. Their pitcher's arm had begun to give out. But the Benham pitcher was better than ever. At this juncture, however, Dick felt a touch on his elbow.

He turned and looked up into the face of Hamilton Scott. The Whiteville millionaire lowered his voice:

"Look here, my boy," he said, "you are doing good work. Do you get any pay for it?"

Dick looked puzzled.

"I ask no pay," he replied.

"Hum! That is foolish. You can command a big salary. Now, look here. I want this game very badly. If you will slow up a little, you understand—give us a few runs—I will give you two hundred dollars, and you can go on our team as change pitcher for a good salary if you wish."

Dick's brain swam. He could hardly believe his senses. Two hundred dollars was an immense sum of money to him. He knew that it would be an easy thing to do to throw the game. He would never be suspected. What was a game of ball, anyway? Only a matter of local pride and no harm done to anybody.

All these thoughts sped through his mind. Then his face

grew rigid. He turned and looked the Whiteville millionaire in the face.

"Do you mean that?" he asked.

"Every word of it," replied Scott.

"Well, sir, it would not be on the square. I will not do it."

"And you refuse my offer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! Make it five hundred."

"No, sir."

"Look here! I've plenty of money. I'd not miss a thousand!"

A thousand dollars was a mighty fortune to Dick. How easy it could be earned. One or two carelessly delivered balls. Nobody could suspect it. I will not say that Dick was not tempted. But he overcame it.

"I cannot do it, Mr. Scott," he said. "My motto is to do things on the square. It is the only way to win."

"But it's losing for you this time."

"Not squarely. The money would give me no pleasure. I cannot do it."

Scott was deeply chagrined. He turned away angrily. Dick went into the box for the ninth inning.

One man hit to second and was fielded out at first. Two more were struck out and the game was ended. Dick Lane was the hero of the hour.

But as he left the field a malevolent voice hissed in his ear:

"You might have done me the favor. I shall remember this day and get square with you."

The speaker was Hamilton Scott. But Dick only shrugged his shoulders. At this moment Colonel Bond came along and said:

"Dick, I have just had a talk with Eva. Come down to the mill in the morning. I want to see you."

"All right, sir," agreed Dick, with a secret thrill of joy. "I will be there."

Once in his room, Dick gave himself up to deductions on the incidents of the day.

He could have easily won the large sum of one thousand dollars. The game of ball was really an affair with little at stake and would be soon forgotten. The thousand dollars would have given him a start in life.

All this he recognized as true. But when he weighed the other side of the question a wonderful sense of peace and righteousness descended upon him. It was the consciousness of having done a noble and true act, and this was reward in itself.

If he had accepted the bribe he would in honor have betrayed his friends. Loyalty was the most powerful element of his being. He was satisfied. He had acted on the square.

So busy was Dick in thinking over plans for the future that he could not sleep that night. He sat in his window and for a time watched the stars.

From his position he could look down into the yard of Colonel Bond's mill. He had often done this before.

He was suddenly struck with a strange fact. A light shone in the window of the office. He could see forms moving about in the place.

"That's queer!" he muttered. "Who can that be?"

He recalled the fact with a thrill that it was near pay day, and that usually a large sum of money was deposited in the safe. Could it be that burglars were at work there?

It did not take Dick long to act. He opened his window and dropped out into the yard. He reached the mill wall and scaled it.

A muffled explosion shook the ground. Dick ran swiftly to the door of the mill office.

CHAPTER IV.

DICK CONCEIVES A WONDERFUL PROJECT.

When Dick felt the shock of the explosion it was easy for him to understand that his theory was correct and that burglars were at work. They had no doubt blown open the safe.

Dick reached the door of the office and found it open. He peered in and beheld a thrilling spectacle.

Four masked men were examining the contents of the safe. Money was piled up on a table.

The burglars were making a big haul. The orphan boy waited for no more. He ran with all speed to the mill gates and closed them.

Then he rushed to the bell tower. He climbed in at a small window by breaking the sash and started the bell going by means of an electric arrangement devised by Colonel Bond in case of a fire. The clangor broke forth upon the night air.

Next Dick started for the postern gate in the mill wall on the opposite side of the yard. Here a watchman slept, and in his room there were firearms. The watchman, aroused by the bell, came to the door just as Dick got there.

"Purdy," cried Dick, excitedly, "the office is being burglarized. Sound the police alarm. Quick!"

The watchman needed no further bidding.

"Lord love ye, lad!" he cried, as he pressed the electric signal. "Have a gun, and we'll try and hold 'em till the police come."

"All right!" cried Dick, seizing the revolver given him by the watchman. Then both started to head off the cracksmen.

Of course the clangor of the alarm bell had instantly aroused the whole town. In turn it had given the burglars the alarm. Snatching up such of their booty as they could, they started to leave the scene.

But as they emerged into the yard they came face to face with Dick and the watchman and found themselves covered by the revolvers.

"Hands up!" cried Dick, in a ringing voice. "You are all surrounded. There is no escape and resistance is death!"

For a moment it seemed as if the burglars would really offer resistance, but what was probably sober second thought induced them not to do so.

"Blame the luck, boys!" cried the leader, as he flung down his satchel. "We are cornered. The game is up!"

Just at this moment the police came. Into the yard they rushed. The result was that the four burglars were quickly handcuffed.

The safe-breaking job was frustrated. People now arrived in throngs, for the alarm bell had aroused the whole town, and everybody thought of fire.

But when the truth was known that a robbery had been attempted the excitement was intense. Dick Lane came in for an ovation.

Colonel Bond now arrived on the scene. Dick tried to get modestly out of the way, but he was held.

"It is nothing," he declared. "I simply saw a light down here from the window of my room and came down to investigate. I then gave the alarm."

"Very good, my boy!" said Colonel Bond, approvingly. "I don't know what more you could be asked to do. I am sure it was enough and quite effective. It has saved the mill company a good many hundreds of dollars!"

"I am very glad of that," said Dick.

"You will be on hand at my office in the morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

Then the crowd dispersed and the excitement was over. Dick went back to his chamber and fell asleep.

He was awake, however, at an early hour. He got an early breakfast and walked out upon the street. His footsteps took him aimlessly down by the river.

He watched the water pour over the great dam for a while. He studied the great mills, the machinery in which was driven by this mighty flood. What a large capital was invested in this enterprise! Would he ever be the owner of such wealth?

Dick had true mercantile spirit. He recognized at once commercial value of the river. Below the falls it was navigable to Whiteville.

It was only a question of a suitable canal around Whiteville and then a free course of one hundred miles to the sea could be claimed.

Dick mentally calculated all these possibilities. He foresaw with calm, clear judgment all the advantages, as well as the obstacles. But on the whole he saw the plan was feasible.

Not only feasible, but loaded with tremendous possibilities of profit. Mentally he calculated every detail.

He drew out some sheets of paper and made some quick and accurate drafts. He even figured the earning capacity of a steamboat line operating between Benham and the sea. And it pleased him.

He already saw the river current bearing on its bosom handsome steamers, puffing tugs and barges laden with coal and lumber.

Why should not the White River be made navigable? Why should not the Benham and Whiteville and Atlantic Navigation Company become a possibility?

Dick Lane was so enthused with his scheme that he hardly took note of the passing time. He continued to figure and calculate, to estimate and approve for an hour or two.

All looked easy to him. A mad longing to carry out the project seized him. But his heart sank a bit as he reflected that he was only a penniless lad. Without capital the project could not succeed.

"I'll make money," decided Dick, "and when I get enough to start this navigation company I'll start it."

Dick was familiar with the study of surveying, and also had made a complete study of financial methods. He could estimate every obstacle necessary to be overcome to carry out his scheme.

But he had no intention of foisting a wildcat scheme upon the stock market. His stern principles revolted against that.

"On the square or not at all," he muttered. "No bubble, but an honest deal. That's the only way!"

He placed the papers which he had drafted in his pocket. Then he turned back along the river bank.

He saw by the mill clock that it was time to keep his appointment with Colonel Bond. So he turned his steps toward the mill office.

As he entered he saw the genial mill owner seated at his desk. Colonel Bond sprang up and held out his hand.

"Good morning, Dick!" he cried, warmly. "I am glad to see you."

"I am happy to meet you, Mr. Bond," replied Dick modestly. "I have come to keep my appointment."

"I knew you would not fail me. Have a chair."

The colonel turned a moment to his desk. Then he said:

"Dick, all the boys are delighted with your pitching in that game of ball yesterday."

"I am sure I did very little," replied Dick, modestly.

"You did everything, lad," said the colonel, persistently.

"Eva and Charlie can talk of nothing else."

Dick's veins tingled.

"I am sure it is very kind of them," he said. "They give me too much credit. I simply played in good luck. Another time they might bat me out of the box."

"You would be a phenomenon if you could pitch every day alike," declared the colonel. "That could not be expected. Now it has been voted that you be made the permanent pitcher of the club."

"Why—I—really!" stammered Dick.

"No if or an about it," declared the colonel. "You are elected on a salary of fifty dollars a month. Besides this, I have a vacancy in my office. The vacancy is that of treasurer of these mills. You are to keep the treasurer's accounts and make a weekly statement to me. The salary is twelve hundred dollars a year. Do you accept the position?"

Dick gave a gasp.

"Twelve hundred!" he ejaculated. "Why, Mr. Stromberg only paid me nine dollars a week!"

Colonel Bond smiled.

"You were worth more money," he said. "But the directors held a meeting last night and I used my influence with them to get you the job. Now you will not show a lack of gratitude to me by refusing, I know."

"Refusing!" stammered Dick. "Why, of course I will accept. But—it is more than I deserve."

"Not a bit of it! As treasurer you will have to furnish a bond. Now I shall go on your bond for one, and Mr. Newhall will be the other bondsman."

There was a queer lump in Dick's throat. He tried to speak, but his tongue failed him. Colonel Bond affected not to notice this, but went on pleasantly:

"I am sure you will succeed, Dick, and I shall take great interest in you. Now we will fix up the bond and the contract in a few days. From this moment you are boy treasurer of the Benham Mills. I congratulate you!"

Colonel Bond extended his hand. Dick grasped it.

"Colonel Bond," he said, with deep earnestness, "I cannot express all my feelings. I am only a poor orphan boy, and I had thought that it would be many years before I could hope to win a position of such great trust."

"But I assure you that I will never abuse that trust. Whatever comes you will find me on the square."

"I am as sure of that as I can be of anything," replied the colonel, warmly. "I think you are earnest and sincere, Dick. Of course, I know it is unusual to give such a position of trust to a mere boy like you."

"But you have grown up under my eyes. I know your character. More than that, you are and will be under my espionage. So I have no fear. I want you to succeed greatly. Like all boys, I suppose you have some cherished scheme."

Dick's cheeks flushed. The colonel looked at him penetratingly. The orphan boy averted his gaze.

Then he suddenly lifted his eyes and looked the colonel squarely in the face.

"Yes, sir; I have," he replied. "Now that fortune has smiled so kindly upon me it is possible that I will be able to see my scheme realized."

"Will you tell me what it is?" asked the colonel. "I am interested."

"I see no reason why I should not," replied Dick. And he drew the papers he had drafted that morning from his pocket.

CHAPTER V.

DOWN THE RIVER.

Dick felt no compunction whatever in confiding his scheme to Colonel Bond. The latter was his friend and he knew him to be a just and honorable man.

So he threw aside all reserve and launched into an eager discussion of his project.

The colonel listened like one spellbound. At times he followed the tracings on the paper and then looked searchingly into Dick's face.

Every moment he was becoming more deeply convinced of one fact. This was that it was no ordinary youth who sat before him.

He was in the presence of a born genius. He made quiet inquiries, interposed objections here and there. But the boy carefully and easily explained them all away.

After a while Dick finished. Then he asked:

"What do you think of the project, Colonel Bond?"

"It is the greatest thing I have heard of for years," replied the colonel. "Moreover, you have made it all so simple that there could not possibly be a failure."

"Then you like it?" asked Dick.

"Indeed I do! There is only one obstacle."

"What is that?"

"We would have to combat old Hamilton Scott at Whiteville. He would try to beat us every way he could."

"That is true enough," agreed Dick. "We would have to provide for that. We could get an option on the land for the canal beforehand."

"It would be the safest way."

"I trust some day I may be enabled to carry out this project."

"If you do, you will become a public benefactor and win fame and fortune as well," declared the colonel. "Be sure and count me in when you get ready for the launching of the project. I have a plan."

"Well?"

"Why not at once incorporate your company? Name it the Benham and Atlantic Navigation Company. You will then have made a start."

I will do so in a few months," declared Dick, enthusiastically. "Oh, you have done much for me, Colonel Bond. I shall not forget it."

"You deserve it all," declared the colonel. "It is all right!"

When the news spread that Dick Lane had been taken in by Colonel Bond and actually made acting treasurer of the mills the surprise was great.

Among Dick's friends there was complete satisfaction. Big Bill Stokes, the blacksmith, wiped the sweat from his brow and cried:

"Aye! but he's equal to it; and I'm glad to know it. Heaven bless him for a good, square lad!"

But Stromberg, the grocer, only frowned and said:

"Humph! The colonel must be crazy. I couldn't teach the lad how to do business. There's no business in him!"

The boys were elated to know that he was hired as the pitcher for the Benham nine.

They felt sure now of winning whatever games they played.

Dick took up the duties of his new position with alacrity and ease. It was his nature to handle affairs of finance, and the affairs of the Benham Mills began to show distinct improvement.

The business men of Benham saw in him a young prodigy. More than this, they recognized the sterling principles to which Dick adhered.

In all transactions he was square and prompt. This won for him the confidence of all. He became exceedingly popular.

Dick's bosom friend was Charlie Bond. The young captain of the baseball nine was Dick's greatest admirer.

They were constantly together. To him Dick had confided his scheme of the navigation company. Charlie became at once an enthusiast.

After business hours the two lads wandered along the river and Dick made surveys and studied plans for his favorite project.

One day they got a small steam launch and went down the river as far as Whiteville. Banking the fires in the launch

they left it moored to the river bank and proceeded to make a detour about the town to locate the possible canal project.

On that side of the river opposite Whiteville was a small hamlet known as East Whiteville. Around this was a run or small valley, and it was seen to be an almost natural waterway around the Whiteville dam.

By a little digging and the use of a lock a canal could be made which would enable boats easily to pass up or down the river. This would make the river navigable from Benham to the sea.

It practically assured the feasibility of Dick's enterprise. The young promoter went carefully over every foot of the land in question.

It was wild land, and doubtless could be purchased very cheaply. All these things Dick considered.

Then he went back to the launch. But as the two boys drew near the river bank they heard loud voices in their rear.

"Why, hello! Here's a whole gang of the Whiteville boys. Say, I'll bet they mean to make trouble for us!"

Dick cast a swift glance over his shoulder.

He saw this was true. A dozen or more youths of about his own size were coming up rapidly.

Now, Dick knew the feeling between the Whiteville boys and the Benham boys. It was not of the warmest nature.

And now that Benham had just defeated them in baseball the feeling of the Whiteville boys toward them would not be of the most cordial sort. It was a dubious outlook.

"Hi! hi!" shouted the Whiteville gang. "Hold up there, Benham! What are ye doing on our grounds? Hi! hi!"

"I say, Dick," said Charlie, apprehensively, "I'm afraid we'll have trouble with those fellows. Let's get out of their way."

But it was against Dick's principles to run. He scorned cowardice.

"No," he replied, resolutely. "They will trouble us at their peril. I am not going to hurry!"

"Well," said Charlie, pluckily, "I'm going to stand by you." Nearer drew the Whiteville boys. They filled the air with Apache-like yells as they came on.

But Dick never hastened his gait. He kept steadily on.

"Hold up, Benham!"

"Hi! hi! Hold up!"

"Benham bums! See 'em run!"

This was enough for Dick. He came to an instant halt and turned. Folding his arms, he waited with flashing eyes. The Whiteville boys came up breathlessly.

They regarded Dick and Charlie with leering scorn and contempt. They surrounded them, and then the ordeal began.

"Aw! aw! Benham bums! Give 'em a good lickin' and send 'em home!"

"'Fraid of us, ain't they? Give 'em a punching! Haw! haw! that's the great baseball pitcher! Let's smash him!"

"No, you won't," said Dick, quietly. "We are not troubling you, and you trouble us at your peril."

A derisive laugh went up at this.

"Ho! ho! Plucky, ain't he? Wants to fight. Give him a punch!"

One tall, hulking youth pretended to stumble and fall up against Dick. The next moment he wished he hadn't.

Swift as a lightning flash Dick's right fist flew out. It caught the fellow under the ear and he went down like an ox. Instinctively the crowd swayed back. Then angry, threatening cries went up.

"Pitch into him, boys! Kill the sucker! Hit him! Smash him!"

One big bully in the crowd stepped forward. Instantly Dick recognized him. It was Aubrey Scott.

"Look here, Dick Lane!" he gritted. "What did you hit that fellow for?"

"Because I felt like it," replied Dick, coolly. "If you did what he did you'd have got hit also."

"The dickens you say! Do you want to fight me?"

"No."

"You're afraid!" sneered Aubrey, who was much larger than Dick. "I'll give you all the satisfaction you want. I'm going to lick you anyway!"

"Not while I'm around!" said Charlie, doubling his fists. "Just give me a try at you, Aubrey Scott."

"Wait till I've licked this fellow first," said Scott, with an ugly grin. "I owe it to him and he deserves it."

"Wait a moment," said Dick. "Are you really in earnest?"

"Of course I am."

"You are a lot of fighting bullies down here at Whiteville. But I'll fight you fair and square on one condition."

"Well, what is it?"

"That the crowd is not to interfere, and if I lick you we are to be allowed to go on our way in peace. Is it agreed?"

"You bet!" said Aubrey, rolling up his sleeves.

"Give me your word on it."

"All right!"

"That settles it!" said Dick. "Hold my coat, Charlie."

"You're not heavy enough for him, Dick. Let me try it."

"No," replied Dick, curtly.

Then they squared off.

The Whiteville boys made a ring and then began to cheer on their champion most vociferously. But Dick was as cool as an icicle.

He waited for his foe to make the first attack. Now Scott was very confident, for he was heavy and strong. But he had never made a bigger mistake in his life.

He danced up to Dick and made a sudden lunge.

His lithe opponent stepped aside and lightly clipped him on the ear. It stung and maddened Scott.

He whirled and struck at Dick. They sparred for a moment. Then Dick crouched and dodged a rush by his enemy.

At the same moment he landed a swift right into Scott's face. Instantly his right eye began to close.

A dismal howl went up from the crowd.

"Go in, Scotty! Finish him! Eat him up!"

Rendered furious by these cries, Scott made a mad rush at Dick, throwing his arms wildly. Dick stepped aside again and struck his adversary under the ear, knocking him down and stunning him.

This was the signal for pandemonium. The ring broke and the crowd rushed upon the two Benham boys like tigers.

CHAPTER VI.

THE INCENDIARY.

It was a precarious position for Dick and Charlie. To face such terrific odds seemed out of the question.

It looked as if they must get a terrible thrashing, when suddenly the crowd scattered. Four men burst into the circle with sticks.

"What are you young devils fighting about?" roared one of them, as he swung his cane vigorously. "Get home to your parents and behave yourselves!"

Four market men driving along the highway had seen the affair. Leaving their teams, they came over just in time to break up the disturbance.

The boys scattered in all directions. Dick and Charlie made for the river bank.

Luckily they found the launch all safe, and leaping into it they started the propeller and were soon steaming away up the river.

"Well," cried Charlie, breathlessly. "How was that for an experience? My soul! I thought we were in for a thrashing, Dick!"

"That is so!" agreed Dick. "Those chaps came up just in time."

"It was a close one!"

"So it was!"

"Oh, but what a licking you gave Scott! And I am so glad of it, for he needed it richly."

"Yes; I think he did," agreed Dick. "At any rate, we are out of the scrape."

"The next time we come down here we'll bring a gang."

"It will be safer. Well, at any rate, I surveyed the bed of the canal, Charlie. It is all feasible."

"That is jolly!"

"Just think of it! Won't it be grand when we get our scheme under way? The Benham and Atlantic Navigation Company, Colonel Bond President, Charles Bond Treasurer, and Richard Lane Secretary, and perhaps Manager."

"No. You shall be President!" cried Charlie.

"Oh, no! Your father is the one for that. He has the age and dignity."

"Well, I can tell you it will be grand," cried Charlie. "We can ride up and down on the steamers with our friends. I know some people who shall have free passes."

"Certainly!"

Thus the boys journeyed homeward on the launch. When they finally reached the wharf at Benham they were surprised to meet Colonel Bond and a man with a constable's uniform.

As the boys sprang up on the wharf Colonel Bond said:

"This is my boy, and the other is Mr. Lane, the treasurer of our mills. Now, what is the charge you have against them?"

"The charge is made by Mr. Hamilton Scott of Whiteville," said the constable. "It is assault and battery upon his son, Mr. Aubrey Scott."

Both Dick and Charlie were astounded. They looked at each other.

"What!" exclaimed Charlie, hotly. "We were the ones assaulted."

"Why, certainly!" declared Dick. "There is a mistake."

"I can't help it!" said the constable. "I have here the warrant!"

"Tell me about it, boys," said the colonel. "If it is persecution, I'll contest Hamilton Scott to the last dollar I have got."

With this Charlie gave a detailed account of the affair. Colonel Bond and the constable listened.

The latter smiled and said:

"There is no doubt but that Aubrey Scott told his father a different story," he said. "However, there were plenty of witnesses. The market men who interfered can be found."

"I thought that was the way of it," declared Colonel Bond.

"I shall see to it that matters are straightened out."

"Then you will go with me to a justice and give bonds?" asked the constable.

"Yes."

The affair turned out as might have been expected. Aubrey Scott was proved the aggressor and the judge dismissed the complaint.

But the feeling between Hamilton Scott and Colonel Bond was intensified and was bound to in time bear fruit.

Time went on and Dick still fostered his navigation scheme. The Benham Mills continued to prosper.

But soon new features began to arise to threaten the peacefulness of the horizon in Benham. In the mill there was a director named Daniel Jenkins. He was the only non-resident stockholder and his home was in Whiteville.

He had a son, Ben Jenkins, who was a great crony of Aubrey Scott's. There was a cordial dislike between Ben and Charlie Bond.

Now it happened that Daniel Jenkins grew deeply interested in stock speculations and met with heavy losses. It soured his disposition and aroused an envious hatred of Colonel Bond and his success.

So it was easy for Jenkins to fall in with Hamilton Scott in a scheme to ruin the magnate of Benham, whom both cordially hated.

This scheme was to buy up a controlling interest in the stock of the mills. It was to be done secretly.

Then the stock was to be depreciated and the mills closed, while the business would be diverted to Whiteville. The purpose of the two villains was accidentally discovered by Dick.

In looking up the listed stock of the company he made the astonishing discovery that many transfers had been made to Jenkins and by him to Hamilton Scott. The latter already owned one-third of the stock.

When Dick brought this information to Colonel Bond the result was easy. The Colonel at once got actively into the market and quickly got the controlling shares. So that Jenkins and Scott suddenly found themselves with a surplus and useless amount of the stock.

And the Colonel, with his controlling power, voted away dividends and levied assessments until he had his foes dancing to a merry tune. This added fuel to the fire.

The result was an angry altercation between Jenkins and the Colonel. Then the former went by the board financially and became the victim of abject poverty.

But the Colonel had made an enemy thus who swore bitter revenge. The fruits of the affair were soon to ripen.

One evening Dick remained late at the office to look over some accounts. It was near midnight when he buttoned his overcoat tight about him and left the office to go home.

As he passed along the walk in the darkness he was given a sudden start by a peculiar fact. A dark figure glided across a distant foot-bridge of the canal and slid into the gloom of the mill yard.

"That's queer!" muttered the young treasurer. "Who could that be? Nobody can be skulking about here at this hour for a good purpose."

The more he reflected upon it the more decided he was to investigate. But just as he reached the foot-bridge he saw a thin flash of flame, and then an object rushed out of the gloom and came crashing down upon him.

Dick clutched some unknown being for an instant by the sleeve. Then the stranger left the coat in his grasp and escaped.

At the same moment the hoarse voice of the watchman, Purdy, was heard across the yard:

"Fire! Fire!"

Dick saw the windows in that side of the mill lit up with the glare of flames.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MAN AT THE BOTTOM.

It was a terrible reflection at that moment to Dick Lane that the Benham Mills were on fire. Yet one glance at the mill windows was enough to show that this was true.

Purdy's voice was shrieking:

"Fire! Fire!"

The watchman had now reached the bell tower and was sending out the alarm. Dick held the coat of the unknown incendiary in his hands.

The young treasurer lost not a moment. His mind was instantly made up.

He started in swift pursuit of the incendiary. But in the darkness it was impossible to find him.

He made good his escape. Dick now turned his steps back to the mill.

The alarm had aroused the town. The fire department was rushing to the scene. Crowds of people were filling the mill yard.

There was one thing which Benham had reason to be proud of and that was its fire department. There was none better in any town of its size.

The fire boys got to work in the quickest possible time. Lines of hose were run into the building and soon water was playing on the flames.

Colonel Bond and Charlie arrived on the scene now, much excited. But there was little they could do.

"How did the fire start?" asked Colonel Bond of Dick. The young treasurer replied:

"I am confident it was the work of an incendiary."

"An incendiary?"

"Yes!"

"How do you know that? Did you see him?"

"I did!"

Dick told his story in detail. Colonel Bond listened with deepest interest. When Dick had finished he said:

"My boy, you did well. I wish that you could have caught the fellow. But there is at least a clew. You have his coat."

"That I have!" cried Dick. And it may tell the story."

"Keep it safe and we will take a look at it later on."

"I will do so."

The flames were making great havoc in the right wing of the mill. But the firemen hoped to confine them there. They worked like heroes.

It was in the early morning hour that they got the fire under control. The main part of the Benham Mills was saved. But it was a close call.

Before noon the last spark was extinguished. The main part of the mill again began to run. But there were many operators employed in the burned part who were thrown out of a job.

The ire of the people was raised in a bitter fashion against the incendiary. If he could have been found it would indeed have fared ill with him.

All manner of theories were suggested. Many people were brought under suspicion. But it remained for Dick and Colonel Bond to hit upon the identity of the cowardly incendiary.

This was by means of the coat which Dick had secured on that eventful night. It told the tale.

By Colonel Bond's orders Dick had preserved the coat. He brought it to the office one day.

"Ah!" exclaimed the Colonel. "I was just going to ask you about that coat. It is a very important clew."

"Do you know who it belonged to?" asked Dick.

"I do not."

"Look here!"

Dick turned back the collar and showed a name stamped on the inner side. The Colonel glanced at it, and his face flushed.

"Daniel Jenkins!"

This was the name. There were also letters in the pockets addressed to Jenkins, and certain proof that the coat was his. Dick and the Colonel looked at each other.

"Ah!" said the Colonel, finally. "We have the fox at last. I can see the whole game. Jenkins was ruined in that little conspiracy to get hold of the stock of the Benham Mills. He has done this for revenge."

"That is just it," said Dick. "Jenkins is the incendiary."

"It is too bad you could not have held him that night."

"That is true! But to tell the truth, Colonel Bond, I think this was only the first card played in the game!"

The Colonel looked searchingly at Dick.

"What is your meaning?" he asked.

"Well, to be brief, I don't think Jenkins is alone in the game. I believe it is a deep-laid conspiracy against you. The burning of the mills was a blow aimed at you at a vital moment."

"A vital moment?"

"Yes. Upon looking up the books I find that the insurance on the mills had expired the day before the fire."

"What?" gasped the Colonel. "Do you mean that, Dick? Were the mills without insurance for that length of time?"

Dick bowed gravely.

"They were, sir," he declared. "The fact may or may not have been known to your foes. It is a remarkable coincidence in any event."

"Well, that is so," agreed the Colonel. "Then I lose on the wing which has been destroyed?"

"Yes, but the loss is not to be compared with what it might have been had the entire mill burned."

"That is very true, and I owe it all to you, Dick. You are a brave hero. So you think others besides Jenkins were in the game?"

"It is my theory that a number of your foes are seeking to ruin you," said the young treasurer. "They hoped to inflict one great loss upon you in the loss of your mills. What other plans they have laid the future may tell."

"Well, I am dumfounded," ejaculated Colonel Bond. "I never dreamed of the existence of such enemies. Under the circumstances I believe it will be well to have those insurance policies renewed without an hour's delay."

"They are already renewed, sir," said Dick. "I attended to that the morning after the fire."

"Well, that was thoughtful of you, Dick," said the Colonel, with great warmth. "You at least I can trust."

"I think you can, sir."

"I know it. I have unlimited confidence in you! To think that Dan Jenkins would descend to such an act! I believe I will give his name to the police!"

"I have already done so privately," said Dick. "But you may be surprised to know that the Jenkinsons, father and son, have decamped. No trace can be found of them anywhere in this region."

The Colonel whistled. Then he arose and slowly paced the floor. He was thoughtful for a long while.

Finally he turned and said:

"Dick, have you an idea who the other members of this precious gang of rascals are?"

For some moments Dick was silent. Then he said plainly:

"Yes, I have an idea, Colonel Bond."

"Let me have it!"

"I may be wrong, but from the bottom of my heart I believe that the person behind all this web of villainy and evil intent is your neighbor down the river, Mr. Hamilton Scott."

Colonel Bond turned like a flash.

"Yes," he cried forcibly. "You have hit the nail on the head, Dick. He is the scoundrel at the bottom of it all. It is to be war to the knife, as I plainly see, and—"

There was a sharp rap on the door. Then the office boy, followed by a dark-featured man, entered and said:

"Mr. Hamilton Scott to see Colonel Bond!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THORN BENEATH THE ROSE.

A more unexpected or astonishing incident could hardly be imagined. For a moment a thrilling tableau was being enacted in the mill office.

Colonel Bond stood stiff with amazement and unconcealed distaste, looking at his visitor. Dick had started up full as surprised as his employer.

While Scott himself, florid and sneering, bowed in a mockingly polite way, and said:

"Captain Bond, it has been many years since I stood in this office and talked business with you. Not very neighborly, eh? Well, I have come to see you upon a very important—and private matter."

He shot a glance at Dick as he said this. The young treasurer looked at the Colonel inquiringly.

"By Joppa!" spluttered the Colonel. "you spoke aright of your last visit, and your neighboring attributes. If your business is private, go ahead without any fear. This young man is completely in my confidence."

For a moment Scott looked amazed. Then he said:

"For your own sake I advise you to send him away. I never had a secretary yet able to hold his tongue."

"Well, you never had one like him," avowed the Colonel.

"Very well. Let him remain."

"Sit down, Dick. Have a chair, Mr. Scott. I know you of old as a man of few words."

"You wish me to be brief?"

"Yes."

"Well, I had thought of extending my condolence in your great loss by fire. My own mills have been fired a few times."

"Were they ever conveniently fired at a time when the insurance policies were invalid from a lapse?"

Scott gave a start. For a moment the color in his face changed. He flashed one quick, wolfish glance at Dick.

Then he replied:

"Was that the case with you?"

"It was, but I wish to say that the policies have been renewed, and there is no longer that danger."

"Eh? What do your words vell?" snapped Scott. "Why don't you peak out?"

"It is not necessary."

"No, it is not," replied Scott. "I know what is in your mind. You are fool enough to fancy that through a spirit of rivalry I am connected with that fire."

"Was not Dan Jenkins your right bower?" asked the Colonel, coolly. Scott turned an ashen color.

"Jenkins!" he gasped. "You don't mean to say that he—"

"Is the incendiary? Yes."

Scott's face was covered with beads of sweat. He stared at the Colonel, and for a moment he seemed apoplectic.

"How do you know it?" he asked.

"We have his coat as evidence. Mr. Lane here pulled it from the back of the incendiary himself!"

"Did he recognize him?"

"Only by the coat."

Scott seemed immensely relieved. He settled back in his chair.

"Humph!" he said. "That's no evidence. Dan Jenkins would never do a thing of that kind. You have no case against him at all. He is a very philanthropic man and gives away his old clothes. Some scoundrel doubtless got his coat in that way."

The Colonel lit a cigar.

"If Dan Jenkins can be found," he said, "to prison he goes. That's all I have to say."

"Well," said Scott, testily, "I did not come here to discuss that case. It is a far more important matter, and concerns us both very deeply."

"What is it?" asked the Colonel.

"First, let us consider our mutual relations and conditions, aside from those of friendship. I mean in a material and business way."

"Very well."

"I am Hamilton Scott, and I am the owner of the Whiteville Mills. I occupy the position of local magnate there, just as you do here."

"Now my power is quite considerable in that region. I understand that you intend to form a navigation company on this river. Is that true?"

If Dick had been smitten with a thunderbolt he could hardly have received a deeper shock. Never in his life had he been more thoroughly astonished. How had Scott learned of his secret?

The Colonel understood Dick's feelings, yet he saw that denial would be only affirmation under the circumstances. So without evasion he said:

"Yes, I had thought of it."

Scott smiled in a peculiar way.

"Exactly!" he continued in an oily tone. "Now, there is only one way to get around the falls, and that is by means of a canal and lock. I have just purchased the land necessary for that."

"Pardon me. Do not misjudge me. I have not done this to block you in any way, nor from personal spite. I heartily sympathize with your scheme, and think it will benefit Whiteville as well as Benham."

"But I intend to assist you all in my power. I can see what mighty advantage it will be for you and I, as the two big men of this valley, to co-operate. We could develop great resources. Do you not agree with me?"

"I can see the logic of your statement," said the Colonel, warily. "Such an arrangement honestly conducted and impartially managed will be a boon to every one concerned."

The Colonel and Dick were both surprised at the stand taken by Scott. But yet they distrusted his motives.

Scott grew exceedingly friendly. He drew out plans of a

canal and discussed the subject pro and con with much zest. He talked very fairly and reasonably. Dick was half pleased.

Under ordinary circumstances both the Colonel and Dick would at once have embraced the other's proposition with great eagerness. But they held themselves in reserve.

They could not believe it possible that Scott could conceal a personal end or motive much longer. They watched for it closely, and it came.

"All these proposals you make are eminently fair and wise, Mr. Scott," said the Colonel. "For my part, I should be very glad to see them executed with good feeling and mutual co-operation."

"It's just this way, Bond," said Scott, in his oiliest manner. "You and I in the past haven't lived as neighbors should, perhaps. Intense rivalry always breeds more or less personal feeling. I am willing to bury the hatchet. We should be united."

"Assure me of your sincerity in that, and I will more than meet you half way," said the Colonel.

"I am glad to hear you talk so reasonable," said the Whiteville magnate. "You have a charming family, Colonel Bond."

"Only my son and daughter, sir."

"And I a son, a noble, upright youth, who will emulate his father and prove my worthy successor. My boy Aubrey, sir, is very dear to my heart. Any young lady in the nation may well feel flattered with the offering of his hand and fortune."

It was out!

Instinctively Dick looked at the Colonel, and the Colonel at Dick. The Colonel's face became lobster red, but he controlled himself with a great effort. He saw the point at once.

"I have never as yet thought of my daughter's future in the way of marriage," said the Colonel.

"Well," said Scott, complacently, "don't you think it is high time, sir?"

CHAPTER IX.

COLONEL BOND'S PROPHECY.

The Colonel's proud figure quivered. Only Dick understood with what an effort he controlled himself.

"Mr. Scott," said the Colonel in a steady voice, as he leaned forward, "my daughter's future is in the hands of God! Whom she loves she will wed. I will never stand between her and her choice!"

"Colonel Bond," replied Scott, "my son loves your daughter. I represent him in a suit for her hand in marriage."

"I am not the arbiter of my daughter's fate, Mr. Scott," replied the Colonel. "If she wishes to wed your son, I shall not refuse her."

"Then you consent?"

"I neither consent nor deny. It is the young man's place to ask her."

"But—if you were to use your authority——"

"Authority!" thundered the Colonel, leaping to his feet. "Do you think I would coerce my daughter's happiness? Do you think I would deny her the liberty of making her life choice? No, sir! My daughter can be trusted to choose a suitable life companion for herself."

Dick's blood tingled. He was thrilled with the justice and nobility of Colonel Bond's decision. He knew instinctively that Eva Bond's future was safe.

Scott had arisen like an aroused tiger. The two sworn rivals faced each other like gladiators.

"I can see the intimation veiled by your words," gritted Scott. "You do not think my son a worthy companion for your daughter. Now, sir, it is just the opposite. I have come here only at my son's earnest solicitation. Otherwise I would never have placed myself in this humiliating position."

"I can assure you in advance that my daughter will never for a moment entertain a proposal of marriage from your son Aubrey," declared the Colonel, coldly.

"Sometimes we are compelled to do things which we dislike in order to gain a desired end."

"To what do you refer?"

"I mentioned a short while ago that I had purchased the land through which you had hoped to run your canal at Whiteville. I control all waterways and rights there," said Scott, with an ugly smile.

"You may continue to control them," said the Colonel, contemptuously. "Do you think I would sell my daughter's happiness for a miserable pittance like that?"

"Then you utterly refuse to entertain my proposal?" asked Scott.

"Utterly and wholly!" replied the Colonel.

An oath dropped from Scott's lips. He picked up his hat.

At the door he paused and, turning, he gave vent to the full malevolence of his nature.

Dick's face blazed, and he half rose from his chair as if to resent the attack, but the Colonel said in a low tone:

"Let him go on, Dick. Words are not fatal missiles."

The door finally closed behind Scott, and he was gone. Colonel Bond turned to his desk with a deep, shuddering breath. His face was pale, and his manner plainly showed worryment.

"Dick," he said, very calmly, "I believe you are a good, true lad. You have heard what has been said. You know consequently the peril in which Eva is placed."

"I can appreciate it, sir," said Dick.

"There is no telling what length this scoundrel might proceed to, if Eva was deprived of my protection. Do not look surprised. I am going to tell you something which I have long kept a secret. I desire you to hold it sacred. My life is very near its end!"

Dick bounded from his chair as if from an electric shock. He started toward Colonel Bond's desk with an expression of solicitude and fear upon his handsome face.

"Colonel Bond," he began, but the Colonel put up his hand.

"Wait," he said. "I did not mean to give you fright. But I have not dared to speak of it to either of my children. Eva, you know, is a bright girl, but she is young and dependent. Charlie is utterly unable to cope with the problems of life as yet. You are different. You have self-reliance and a remarkably keen insight of the world for a boy of your age. I begin to see that you are my mainstay. I choose you, Dick, because I know that you are honest and always on the square!"

Dick was deeply touched. There was emotion in his voice as he replied:

"You give me altogether too much credit, Colonel Bond. My abilities are limited, but I hope to improve. But setting this aside, I thank you for your confidence, and I will say that it shall never be abused. To Charlie I will ever be a brother, if you desire; to Eva I will give my life if necessary in her defense."

The Colonel grasped Dick's hand. He trembled, and it could be seen that he was very deeply in earnest.

"I am sure of your sincerity, Dick," he said. "I know that you are of the stuff of which successful men are made. You will win in life's race. Therefore I am anxious to enlist your sympathy."

"Then be assured, Colonel Bond, I will do all I can for you," said Dick, earnestly. "And my motto is 'On the square.' But you distress me when you speak so discouragingly of your health. It cannot be as bad as you fear."

"Dick," said Colonel Bond, impressively, "in another week I shall be dead. Mark me, I know what I am talking about."

Chilled with horror, Dick tried to think of some logical course to pursue. He might have thought his employer wildly insane, but a glance into his eyes dispelled that.

"You should not talk so, Colonel Bond," he said. "It cannot be so."

The Colonel smiled and said lightly:

"There, think no more of it, Dick. Be sure and mention the matter to nobody. Now, let me show you how these balances compare."

Colonel Bond took several big ledgers from the safe and soon was busy with Dick in looking them over. They were thus engaged when the door flew suddenly open.

Charlie Bond sprang into the office in an excited manner.

CHAPTER X.

DICK GOES INTO THE CREW.

Charlie Bond was breathless and excited. He rushed up to the desk and threw his arms about Dick with a bear-like hug.

"We've got to have you," he cried. "You must do it. We can't win any other way."

Astonished, Dick disengaged himself and the Colonel said reprovingly:

"Don't be so boyish, Charlie. It is about time that you were beginning to shape yourself into a man. The near future holds great responsibilities for you."

"Don't scold me, father, until after the regatta," cried Charlie. "Then I am willing to be a man or anything else you say. But I'll lose all the good effects of my training if you are too hard on me now."

"Oh, the regatta," said the Colonel. "I had forgotten about that. What crews are entered, Charlie?"

"The Dugdale, the Crescent, the Cornucopia and the Scotts."

"And the Benhams?"

"Oh, yes, of course, our crew."

"Whew!" exclaimed the Colonel. "That is a great entry. There will be a hot race. Over the regular course, eh?"

"Yes; the Mount Prophet Club gives the prizes. We stood a fine show up to yesterday. Then Will Payson got typhoid and had to leave the boat."

"That is too bad," declared Dick.

"Yes," agreed the Colonel. "Payson was your stroke oar."

"Dear me, it puts us out of the race," declared Charlie, ruefully, "unless—"

"What?"

"We can get Dick Lane to stroke for us?"

"Dick!" exclaimed the Colonel. "Is he an oarsman?"

"Is he?" exclaimed Charlie, excitedly. "Is he not? Well, I wish you could see him! The first day he went up the river he struck Corcoran, the crack, in a single shell, and beat him hands down!"

"Is that true, Dick?" asked the Colonel, sharply. Dick hung his head. Then remembering that he had done nothing to be ashamed of, he raised his eyes and looked at his inquisitor steadily and strongly.

"I can row a little," he said. "But I truly believe Corcoran may have been out of condition that day."

Charlie laughed loudly.

"Oh, you are too modest by half!" he declared. "You beat him fair and square. Now promise that you will stroke for us. We are beaten if you do not."

"Mercy!" exclaimed Dick, facetiously. "I hope you don't expect me to win the race for you? That is too much responsibility."

"Oh, don't hector, please," cried Charlie. "It is a very serious matter. The honor of Benham is involved. The stroke of the Scotts, who is no other than Aubrey Scott himself, swears he will run over us!"

"Oh, he does, eh?" he inquired. "Well, that is a serious threat."

"I hope you will row, Dick," said the Colonel, quietly. "I am glad to discover another of your legion of accomplishments."

"I have not been in a boat for weeks," cried Dick. "I am not trained. I might give out."

"You know better!" cried Charlie. "You are one of those kind of athletes who never need training. That is, they are always in training naturally. Now, please agree."

Dick looked at the Colonel. He seemed to see an appeal in his employer's eyes. He understood that though seemingly a simple matter much depended on this regatta.

"All right, Charlie," he said. "I'll go with the crew this evening."

"Oh, jolly!" cried Charlie, turning a handspring. "We'll win now, sure."

He left precipitately to carry the good news to his friends. Dick and the Colonel soon finished the ledger.

"I am glad you are going into the regatta, Dick," said the Colonel. "It is quite the affair of the season hereabouts. I am sure you will row a good race."

"I shall try," replied Dick. "But I never heard of this regatta before, and I am assured it is an annual affair."

"Yes, just as our baseball league is. The only unpleasant thing about it is the certainty of coming into competition with the Whiteville crew and the Scotts. Everybody down there in the athletic and social line is run by Aubrey Scott. You see, he is the stroke of their crew, and you know what kind of a fellow he is. I am glad to have you in our boat, for you are strong and shrewd, and I don't believe he can work any points on you."

The Colonel spoke confidently, and with no intent of flattery. Dick understood him and replied:

"I shall be on my guard, Colonel Bond. I assure you I will do my best."

That evening Dick appeared at the boathouse ready for a practice spin with the crew. He knew the handicap of a lack of practice with them, and he saw with gratification that their stroke was not so radically different from his own that he need make much change.

The boys greeted him warmly. He took his place in the boat, and soon the light shell was moving up the river at a moderate stroke of thirty-two.

Dick's spirits rose as he felt the exhilarating thrill of the boat beneath him. He was fond of rowing.

He coached the boys a little, and they responded readily.

"Lower the blades a little on the recovery," he directed. "Give a little snap at the pull. That will hold the boat up while you recover. Now, steady all!"

The boys caught the idea instantly. They bent to their work and made the light shell fairly fly through the water.

Back to the boathouse they went and indulged in a good rub-down and bath. All were in the pink of condition. Dick felt confident.

"We have a good crew, Charlie," he said, as they left the boathouse together. "I think we have a show to win."

"Oh, I know we have, now that you are in the boat," cried Charlie, exuberantly. "I'd give anything to beat the Scotts. They have had a professional crack to coach them."

Dick smiled grimly. Already his spirit was rising for the fray.

He went home and retired early. The next day he was at his work as usual. But he was careful not to overdo.

Meanwhile the coming regatta was the talk of the country about. The placing of Dick Lane in the boat at such short notice was the cause of much comment and a variety of opinions.

"That puts the Benham crew out of it," said one experienced trainer. "You see, he is a green man, and he'll just pull himself out before the distance is over."

"Whoever heard of Dick Lane?" sneered another oarsman. "He never rowed in a race that ever I heard of."

The opinion of the majority was rather against the chances of the Benhams. None of the boys in the Benham eight, however, made any comment. But they were immensely confident of giving everybody a hot surprise.

When the news reached Whiteville, it created much elation.

"Hurrah!" cried Aubrey Scott, jubilantly. "We'll make a show of those gawks. The idea of putting that greenhorn in for stroke oar!"

Indeed there seemed quite a good justification for this opinion. It was true that Dick had never rowed except in trial. He was certainly inexperienced in that respect. But he was a good oarsman just the same.

CHAPTER XI.

THE REGATTA.

Every hour the interest in the regatta increased. People began early to flock into Benham from all the region about.

All sorts and conditions of men they were, too.

Even the gamblers and the pickpockets ventured to invade the town. Large odds were offered against the Benham crew, and Whiteville money went begging in Benham.

The course was all staked out, and everything was in readiness. As the hour for the races drew near, great crowds of people thronged the river bank.

It was said that the Scotts had backed their crew for a large amount. It was certain that Colonel Bond did not back the Benhams, for he did not believe in betting.

The Dugdales were the first crew to appear on the river. They were boys from the town of that name near by.

Then came the Crescents, the Cornucopia crew, and the Benhams. All were at the starting line, and yet the Scotts had not appeared.

A murmur went through the crowd. Had anything happened? There was a vague rumor of a quarrel in the Scott quarters. But at the last moment the down-river eight appeared.

They came upon the scene with great flourish. Several tugs loaded with Whiteville enthusiasts accompanied them, and two brass bands on their decks played inspiring music.

Suddenly the coxswain of the Scotts steered his boat directly at the light shell of the Benham crew. Another moment and there would have been a collision.

"Look out there, Scott!" sang out Dick. "Bear off!"

"Get out of our position!" shouted the Scott coxswain. "I'll run you down if you don't."

"We're in our right position," replied Dick. "You're fourth in the line. We have second place."

"That's a lie!" cried the stroke, who was no other than Aubrey Scott.

"Hi! hi! there!" shouted the referee. "Pull out for position, Scott!"

But the design of the Scott coxswain was plain enough. In another moment the prow of his boat would have caught the Benham boat right under Dick's seat. The result would have put the Benham boat out of the race.

But Dick made a quick drive with his right oar and placed the blade full against the bow of the Scott shell. Exerting all his strength, he averted the collision, and the two boats swung alongside each other.

"What do you mean by taking our position?" yelled Aubrey Scott, angrily. "Get out of our way, or we'll dump you!"

"No, you won't!" cried one of the Benham boys, as he raised his oar. But Dick's trumpet voice went up.

"Steady, Benham! Remember you are gentlemen. Leave the point to the referee."

As it happened, the referee's boat had glided up to the spot. He was very angry.

"What are you doing there, Scott?" he cried excitedly. "Get into your position!"

"This is our position," cried Aubrey.

"You know better! You are fourth in the line. Get in line quickly or I'll at once disqualify you! It's a mean trick of yours, Scott, and if you had punched Benham's boat you would have gone out of the race, too."

The crowd on the shore could not know what all this meant. But the crews in the other boats and the reporters and officials in the tugs did.

They at once raised an outcry against Scott. Baffled, the down-river crew dropped out into its proper position.

"Did you ever see the beat of that?" cried Charlie. "They meant to ram us!"

"It's nothing more than we might expect," said Dick.

"We must look out and keep out of their way at the stake boat. They'll surely try to turn our stake!"

"Won't that disqualify them?" asked one of the boys.

"No," replied Dick, "not unless we can show that we got there first and were entitled to the first turn."

"Well," cried Charlie, "I hope they won't get in reach of us after we get started."

"We must put all the distance possible between us!"

Just at that moment the megaphone of the starter was heard:

"Boats ready!"

Every boat worked up to the line.

"Dip oars!"

"Crack!"

The report of the pistol was heard. Down went brawny backs and into the water went the oars. They came back flashing and glistening, only to be dipped again and again with lightning speed.

Away went the crews.

Dugdale showed in front.

Cornucopia was second, Scott third, Crescent fourth and the Benhams half a length to the rear. But the start has very little to do with the finish in a boat race.

A great rumbling cheer went up from the crowd on shore.

Dugdale increased its lead a full length in the first half mile. Cornucopia and Crescent were even, and had both given way to Scott, which was second. Benham was still in the rear.

It was a critical moment. The boys had for the moment forgotten Dick's coaching about the recovery. However, the young stroke was very cool, and just as if in practice he said:

"Slow stroke a bit. Steady, number three. Dip lighter, four. Now, six, remember the snap at the full. Now bend to it!"

In an instant the Benham boys caught the rhythm. They jumped to the line of the stroke oar and from that moment never dropped it.

Friends of the Benhams on shore groaned. The knowing ones said: "I told you so!" The critical ones said: "They have no stroke!"

But suddenly the Benham boys were seen to have swung into the most beautiful and telling stroke of all. Their boat glided up on Cornucopia and Crescent very steadily.

"Look at Benham! See her gain!"

"Hurrah! Scott will win! She has collared the Dugdales!"

These cries were blended. The Dugdales fought manfully for their lead. Dick once looked over his shoulder. He saw the mile stake had been passed and they were nearing the two mile or turning stake.

The young oarsman was pleased with one thing.

The hot race with the Dugdales disposed of the possibility of Scott interfering at the turning stake.

There was a certainty that Scott would turn first. But it was a long ways home. The race was only half over. That final two miles would be the real test.

Dick was cool enough to realize that it was going to be no easy victory. He knew that he could win only by steady and brilliant work.

The coxswain of the Benhams now gave the signal for the turn. Oars were rested and water was backed. The light shell reached the stake.

So well timed was it that the boat came around like a bird, and was ready for the homeward spin.

CHAPTER XII.

DICK IS WARNED.

The Dugdales had turned first. Scott was hardly a second behind them. At that moment both crews looked limp and tired.

Dick noticed this and smiled. He knew that he had not begun to call upon the reserve of his men.

Four lengths away Dugdale and Scott were neck and neck. Then Dick gave the word.

"Run her up to thirty-six, boys!"

The result was marvelous. Very quickly half the distance had been gained. Steadily, foot by foot, Benham crept upon the leaders.

People on shore cheered madly.

Dick now lowered his back and said:

"Come, boys! Make it forty;"

Like bending willow the strong backs of the Benham boys went down and the stroke went up. As if by magic Benham ran up even with the leaders.

The third mile post had been passed. In a few minutes now the result would be known.

The Scotts saw the Benham crew drawing up. Instantly the Scott coxswain tried the dirtiest trick known in boat racing.

He changed his course obliquely to cut across Benham's bow. This is allowable when there is plenty of leeway and the speed of the rival boat is not interfered with.

But it became evident that there was not room. Benham would be obliged to shorten stroke if she changed her course.

It looked as if Scott meant to disgrace the affair with a deliberate foul, and a growling cry of remonstrance went up from the judge's boat. But Aubrey Scott cried:

"Keep on, Lee! Cut 'em out! Give 'em back wash!"

Lee, the coxswain, obeyed orders. Dick could have slackened speed then and there and claimed the race on a foul. But he was averse to doing this.

He knew that in a square race he could beat the Scotts. So he meant to cross the line first if possible.

He spoke in a low, even tone to the Benham coxswain.

"A little to port, Prouty. Sheer away from them. We may outrun them."

Gently the Benham shell swung toward the shore a trifle. This gave leeway, and a question of speed was the issue now. The Benham boys bent to a stroke of forty-two.

This was a tremendous stroke, and could not be maintained long by any crew. But it gave the Benham boys just the needed advantage.

It looked as if there would be a collision. The Scott shell was bearing right down upon the Benhams. A shout of warning went up from the referee.

"Starboard, Scott!" he yelled. "Look out for a foul!"

The Benham coxswain now straightened his boat. Too late. Lee tried to bring his shell alongside. The momentum was too great.

The Scott shell cut within two feet of the stern of the Benham shell. Then it got the back wash to pay for it. The Scott oarsmen were drenched with water. The snide game was a failure.

Moreover, it gave Benham a lead of one length.

"Drop to thirty-eight, boys," said Dick.

The Scott oarsmen had completely exhausted themselves in the attempt to foul the Benhams. They fell to a thirty-four stroke and drifted rapidly astern.

The distance to the line was now only one hundred yards. A moment later the Benham crew crossed it a winner by four lengths.

The Scotts ceased rowing. One of their men fainted. The crowd on shore yelled and cheered. It was a popular victory.

The Benham boys were comparatively fresh as they paddled down to their quarters.

There a great crowd met them. They were heroes of the hour. But Charlie Bond cried:

"All the credit belongs to Dick Lane. We would have lost but for him. He managed it all and taught us the winning stroke."

Colonel Bond fairly embraced Dick with tears in his eyes. The orphan boy's nerves tingled, though, when Eva bestowed upon him her sweetest smile and warmly congratulated him.

In spite of all cowardly work on their part, the Scotts had been fairly and squarely beaten.

They wended their way homeward much chagrined and disgruntled. A bystander heard Aubrey say:

"So Dick Lane is running things up here, eh? Well, he's a bit too fresh, and he'd better keep his eyes open for trouble."

This covert threat reached Dick's ears. But he only shrugged his shoulders and said:

"Humph! It is only a coward who threatens. Brave men alone execute. I do not fear him."

Dick Lane was the most popular young man in Benham now. He became literally an idol.

"He is honest and always on the square," was the verdict.

For some days matters went on their even way in Benham. In going to his home Dick often passed the blacksmith shop of Bill Stokes.

The smith called him in one day and said:

"My lad, ye have profited well by the motto I gave ye. It's a good one, and ye live up to it well. Be always 'on the square.' Now, I tell ye that there is trouble ahead for ye."

"Trouble!" exclaimed Dick. "What do you mean, Bill?"

Keep a stiff upper lip, lad," said the smith, folding his ponderous arms. "They'll never do ye harm while Bill Stokes can fight for ye."

"Who?"

"The gang down at Whiteville. They feel mighty sore over that boat race. Now I have word from reliable parties that they mean to do you up."

"Do you mean Scott's gang?"

"That's what I mean, lad."

Dick felt a queer thrill. He was not in the least a victim of fear, but he knew that Stokes spoke from earnest conviction.

A premonition of impending evil had been upon him for some time past. The time for his most crucial test had come.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HORSEBACK RIDE.

Dick Lane did not forget the warning of the blacksmith. It figured in his dreams that night.

He knew that Aubrey Scott was vengeful and vindictive. There was no doubt but that he held bitter hatred for the youth who had been the cause of his defeat in the boat race.

He would be on his guard so far as he was personally concerned. But he thought little of himself.

He thought of the threat uttered by Hamilton Scott in that famous interview in the mill office when he asked for the hand of Eva Bond in marriage to his precious rascal of a son.

Also this recalled another matter, and this was the strange declaration of Colonel Bond that his life was near its end. The more Dick pondered over this the more puzzled he became.

He longed to seek the advice of an older person. But he remembered the pledge of secrecy exacted by Colonel Bond, and so was silent.

However, the breaking of this pledge could have had no effect upon the after result. Why Colonel Bond should have predicted his end was strange enough. But the case is not uncommon, and many such instances are on record.

All these things oppressed Dick very greatly, and he was consequently in anything but his usual cheerful frame of mind.

One day Charlie extended him an invitation to gallop into the country with him on horseback. Colonel Bond kept a number of very fine saddle horses.

Charlie was a good rider. Dick was the same and very fond of the sport.

But when Dick appeared at the Bond mansion Eva appeared with Charlie. She was prettily attired in a dainty riding-habit.

"I feel sure you will not object to my going, Dick," she said, archly. "Charlie says I will be an incumbrance."

"I am sure the incumbrance will only add to the pleasure of the trip," said Dick, gallantly.

"Boys never do see anything in their own sister, you know. Now if I were some other fellow's sister."

Charlie made a comical grimace, and Eva laughed merrily.

"There, Puss, don't you believe it," cried Charlie, impulsively. "I think a great deal of my sister. You shall go, and I shall enjoy your going just as much as Dick Lane will."

"That is spoken like a dear, good brother," cried Eva, happily. "I will try and keep up with Jenny. She is a pretty good roadster if she can't run as fast as your Jim."

"Jim is the best horse in the stable," declared Charlie. "I suppose I ought to let my guest have him," bowing to Dick. "Would not that be proper courtesy?"

But Dick made a wry face.

"I think not," he replied facetiously. "You are a better

rider, Charlie, and, from what I have heard of your Jim, I prefer to let you ride him."

"He is very clever."

"Too clever for me, I fear."

"Well, you shall ride Alexis, then. He can run a bit and is better at a fence than Jim."

The horses were saddled. They were all thoroughbreds, Jenny, of course, being the mildest-tempered animal.

The three young people rode out of the town in a gay humor. They took the river road, which led toward Whiteville, as chance had it.

They rode on for a few miles at a gallop. Then, as the day was warm and the horses grew sweaty, the pace was reduced to an amble.

The road led beneath high, arching branches of trees and the river shimmered brightly upon one side, while a steep bluff rose upon the other.

Suddenly the rattle of wheels was heard and around a bend in the road came a four-in-hand.

There were a half dozen young men on the drag, and they were singing in a rollicking fashion. The youth who was driving the horses was doing so in a reckless way.

Straight along the road he came. The courtesy of the road requires that a team shall always turn out as far to the right as possible. The law demands it.

But the driver of the four-in-hand seemed disposed to make no account of the three horses ahead. He bore down upon them like the driver of a Juggernaut car.

"Confound the fellow!" cried Charlie. "Isn't he going to turn out for us? He'll have us in the river yet."

"Why, he is drunk, and so are the rest of them," cried Dick in alarm. "On my word, it is Aubrey Scott!"

This was true. It was the son of the Whiteville magnate. With a party of boon companions he had started out upon a drive. The case of champagne aboard had made them all very drunk.

Aubrey was hardly in a condition to safely drive a four-in-hand, which requires steady nerve and delicate skill. His bleared gaze did not seem to heed the horsemen, even if he saw them.

"Hi, there!" shouted Dick, angrily. "Turn out, will you!"

But the words were unheeded. Another moment, and the lead horses of the four-in-hand would have forced Dick's horse off into the deep descent to the water's edge.

But Dick turned his horse back and began to retreat before the coach, as did Charlie and Eva. All might have been well, but just then one of the young men on the drag raised the horn and gave forth a blatant blare.

The three thoroughbreds gave a convulsive leap into the air. Dick and Charlie were strong enough to restrain their horses, but Eva's mare gave a mad lunge and went plunging down toward the river.

Eva held her seat well at first. But Jenny stumbled at the river brink and threw the girl rider heavily against a tree-trunk. She lay unconscious.

The mare went careening up the river bank. For a moment Dick and Charlie were so horrified that they forgot about the four-in-hand.

The next moment the lead horses struck Charlie's horse in the flank. The thoroughbred went down, and Charlie was thrown over the edge of the bank, but was fortunately uninjured.

But the lead horses in the collision also went down. They floundered, and the pole horses went down upon them. The drag reeled, tipped and went over, throwing the occupants into the road.

What followed was confusing enough. Dick sprang from his horse and started instantly to Eva's relief. He thought of nothing else.

Charlie recovered himself and did the same. When they reached the young girl's side, Dick raised her head tenderly, though tremblingly.

The awful fear was upon him that she was dead. But as he dashed some water in her face, he saw her eyelids quiver, and she came to.

She looked up in his face in a bewildered way. Dick never remembered just what he did say to her, but there was a vague impression afterward that the terms were most endearing.

However, it was, she smiled and quickly recovered. As good fortune had it, she was uninjured, save for a few bruises and the shock of her fall.

So that presently she was upon her feet and quite herself again.

"My! but I thought I was going into the river," she cried,

shudderingly. "I only remember that Jenny fell. But where has she gone, and where are your horses?"

Dick and Charlie looked ruefully into the distance. It had occurred to them both that it was a long walk home. The horses were doubtless far on their way there.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE BY THE ROADSIDE.

"I am afraid we shall have to find other conveyance home, Miss Eva," said Dick. "You are not able to walk."

"Indeed I am!" declared the young girl, stoutly. "I am sure I shall enjoy it after this experience."

"But we are not the only sufferers," declared Charlie. "All those fellows took a tumble. My! but hear them swear!"

The vilest of oaths and expressions came down from the roadway above. Dick took Eva's hand.

"Come," he said briefly. "Let us get away from this locality."

They climbed the steep bank to the roadway. There the scene was appalling.

The four-in-hand was a wreck. The horses had broken the traces of the harness and disappeared down the road. The handsome drag was upside down.

The occupants, none of whom were injured, were dusting their clothes and cursing loudly and roundly. But the worst was to come.

At that moment they caught sight of our three adventurers, whom they were pleased to regard as the cause of all their troubles. The effect was thrilling.

At once they came staggering up and surrounded them. Dick placed himself before Eva.

The odds were six to two.

"I say, you countrymen, what did you run into us for?"

"You've wrecked our rig!"

"Make 'em pay for it!"

There were the exclamations hurled at Dick and Charlie. But our young friends stood their ground boldly.

"We didn't run into you," said Dick, firmly. "You ran us down! The fault is all your own. This young lady was thrown and nearly killed. You are all drunk and deserve to be arrested!"

"You!" hissed Scott, in a maudlin manner. "Is it you, Dick Lane? Hey, boys, this is the stroke of the Benham eight! Have we anything for him?"

Hisses arose. The young drunkards were "excessively vituperative."

"Hang him up by the toes!"

"Give him a cold bath!"

"Do him up!"

These savage cries, however, did not daunt Dick nor Charlie in the least. Dick was preparing for the collision which he knew must come.

But Scott had fixed his bleared gaze upon Eva. His face flamed with a sudden swift passion. All the villainess of his ruffianly nature asserted itself.

He took off his hat mockingly and sidled toward Eva.

"Ah, my pretty one," he said coarsely. "You refused to marry me. I think I know the reason why. You are in love with this young pauper here. Well, I'll have a kiss to make up for it, anyway!"

He made a move toward Eva. Dick's eyes flashed lightning.

His right arm shot out like a catapult. Young Scott almost turned a complete somersault with the force of the blow.

"You scoundrel!" gritted Dick.

In an instant Scott was upon his feet. He was flaming with rage.

"Come on, boys!" he cried. "Let's thrash the young cubs! Clean 'em out, I say. I want your help."

"Pitch into 'em!" yelled one of the young ruffians.

This was the signal for the attack. Dick knew that the brunt of the battle must fall upon him.

Charlie was a good boy, but not very strong or athletic. Dick could fight as long as he could see, for he was possessed of the proper spirit.

One thing he counted upon to his advantage. Most of the young ruffians were unsteady on their feet from the effects of drink.

Dick was full of resource and utterly devoid of fear. He placed Eva behind him and said encouragingly:

"Do not be frightened, Miss Bond. I think I can promise you that no harm shall befall you."

"But I fear for you," said Eva, with thrilling apprehension.

"You need not," declared Dick. But before he could say more the crash came. The battle was on.

Incited by the infuriated Scott, the young bloods came charging at Dick and Charlie. Two of them forced Charlie against a tree and began to pound him severely. The young scion of the Bonds, however, fought pluckily.

Dick met the first one of his assailants with an uppercut on the chin. The fellow went to his knees. The second tumbled over him, and Dick gave him a cuff over the ears which stretched him flat.

The other two, however, were close behind him. One of these was Scott, who was foaming at the mouth and raving furiously.

"Blame you, Dick Lane!" he howled. "I'll kill you for this!"

This awful threat, however, did not ruffle the orphan boy. He drew himself up and made a blow at number three of his assailants.

The fellow dodged it and hit back at Dick so skillfully that it was plain he was skilled in boxing. There was no time to lose.

The others were getting upon their feet and soon it would be close quarters. Dick saw this and made a feint. Then he swung with lightning quickness. He succeeded in completely closing one of his opponent's eyes and bringing him senseless to the ground.

Then Dick stepped forward to meet the young villain Scott. Never in his life had he done anything with greater eagerness.

Scott, full of vengeful hatred and confident in his greater size and strength, rushed at Dick.

He never made a greater mistake. Dick dodged his ponderous blows and then sent in one from the shoulder which took Scott fair on the nose.

Scott gasped, reeled, and the blood spurted from his nostrils. A howl of intense pain escaped him.

But before he could recover Dick closed with him. He rained blows upon the young rascal and fairly beat him to the earth. Scott, half senseless, cowered there and begged for mercy.

His companions now came again to the attack.

Dick met them and knocked down one after another in turn. But he saw that the odds were too great. He could not hope to keep this thing up forever.

So he said to Eva:

"Miss Bond, I beg you to climb up to the roadway and scream for help. Keep on the road for a short distance. Somebody may come."

Eva hastened to do this bidding. In a moment her courage arose. She tripped quickly up the steep. But just as she reached the road she was thrilled with joy at a welcome sight.

Around a bend in the road at full speed came a horse and wagon. In it were two of the grooms from the Bead stable and the head coachman.

The runaway horses had reached home and told the tale of a disaster. At once Colonel Bond had sent his men to the scene.

They arrived just in the nick of time. The ruffians were pounding Charlie into insensibility. Dick had reached his side and was holding the whole of them at bay.

But his strength was giving out, and nothing was more welcome to him than the sight of reinforcements.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLOW FALLS.

Down the embankment came the Bond grooms.

They took in the situation at a glance. They were strong, husky fellows, and as they bore down on the Scott gang the villains took the alarm and gave up the struggle.

They scattered and fled.

Some of them had good reason to remember the force of Dick Lane's fists. Scott himself had a broken nose, a closed optic and any number of bruises.

The head coachman, Hardy, sprang to Charlie's side.

"Lord love us, Master Charlie," he cried. "They have hurt ye bad!"

"Not a bit of it," cried Charlie, displaying great pluck, as he tried to stanch the flow of blood from his nostrils. "I never had so much fun in my life. I blacked the eyes of one of the gang, anyway."

At this everybody laughed, and Dick wiped the blood—not his own, but his opponents'—from his hands.

There was no likelihood that the gang would return to the attack. All now went back to the highway.

There was room in the wagon for all. Eva sat on the front seat with Dick, who drove home. The Scott party were left to care for their damaged drag as best they might.

It had been an exciting affair, and only had the effect of increasing the spirit of hatred between the Scotts and the Bonds. There was little chance for a healing of the breach now.

Great excitement was created in both Benham and Whiteville. The feud was on.

Even mill operatives of the two towns when they met went to fighting, as if from instinct. There was most intense fractional feeling.

But Dick was the hero of the hour. His plucky work in so long holding the gang at bay won him great praise.

Dick modestly denied all credit, however, and went back to his duties as mill treasurer with quiet zest. He worked for several days very zealously.

Meanwhile the week had passed and Colonel Bond's prophecy had not come to pass. But one day the Colonel walked into the office and said:

"Dick, I'd like to see you in private."

Dick arose and followed the millionaire into his private office.

Colonel Bond laid a package of papers on the desk and said:

"Dick, I want you to take notice of this. These papers contain a full explanation of all my business affairs. They are a key to my circumstances. In case of my death they will explain the amount of my property, where it is and how I want it disposed of. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied Dick.

"Now, I shall put these papers in this compartment of the safe. You know the combination. If anything happens to me be sure and get possession of these papers at once. And look after Eva."

Dick leaned forward.

"Colonel Bond," he said, "you may be sure that your commands will be implicitly obeyed. I will take all pains to do so."

"Thank you, my boy. I feel sure of that!"

"But it pains me," continued Dick, "that you take so gloomy a look at the future. I am sure you will be spared for many years yet."

Colonel Bond did not raise his head, but he said very quietly:

"I am in the hands of fate, Dick."

Dick went back to his desk. He had already begun to look upon the Colonel's depressed outlook as only the peculiarity of an overwrought mind. Such things are common with some people.

Just at this moment Charlie came in with his usual precipitation.

"Oh, Dick!" he cried. "We're going to have a straw ride to-night. Lots of the young people are going, and we all want you to go!"

"Well, isn't it rather sudden?" asked Dick, with surprise.

"No—yes; that is, we began to get it up this morning. Will you go?"

"I shall be delighted," replied Dick, with a laugh. "Provided we do not go toward Whiteville."

Charlie laughed also.

"That is so," he cried. "I believe it would be our Waterloo next time."

"Who is going?"

Charlie enumerated a large number of the young people of Benham. Dick was secretly pleased when he learned that Eva was one of the party.

A large wagon had been procured and filled with straw. Farmer Smith was to hitch up his four chestnuts, and they were to drive ten miles to a country tavern.

There they would get a supper and dance and return later. It was a delightful programme.

And like everything of the kind, it was a glorious success. Dick was never happier in his life, for Eva was his constant companion going and coming.

They did not get home until about two o'clock in the morning. Dick had arranged to spend the night with Charlie.

So as the three, Charlie, Dick and Eva, made their way up the graveled drive to the door of the mansion, all saw a red light in one of the windows.

This was the library.

"Why, that is queer," said Charlie. "Can father be up so late?"

"Perhaps he decided to wait for us," declared Eva.

"It is not a usual thing for him to do," said Charlie. "Well, let's all bounce in upon him and tell him of the good time we have had."

This seemed like a capital plan, so the three young people made their way at once through the long hall to the door of the library. Charlie flung it open, and they trooped in.

Colonel Bond sat in his chair. His back was toward them. "Why, he's asleep!" cried Charlie, as he leaned over his father's shoulder. Then he gasped: "How awfully pale he is!"

A sudden horrible premonition of the truth crossed Dick's mind. He looked at Eva and wondered how he would get her out of the room. He looked once into Colonel Bond's face and saw the truth.

He was dead!

CHAPTER XVI.

DICK RISES TO THE OCCASION.

Dick Lane was a brave youth. It was not the first time he had looked upon death. What troubled him now was the thought of Eva.

In vain he tried to think of some subterfuge. He moved toward the young girl and whispered:

"Come! Let us leave him to finish his nap. We will not disturb him."

But Charlie had already begun to suspect the truth. He placed a hand on that of his father.

"Oh, my! but his hands are like ice!" he cried. Then he bent over and looked into the Colonel's face. "His eyes are wide open. He is not asleep. Oh—oh—oh! he is——"

The balance of the sentence died away in his throat. He stood for a moment with eyes glazed with horror and fear and half comprehension.

Eva was quick of perception. Like a flash she seemed to guess the terrible truth. She turned a white, startled look of inquiry upon Dick. The young treasurer could not carry deception further. He held out his arms pleadingly.

"Eva, be brave," he said earnestly. "I am going to defend you now. I am your protector henceforth, by your father's request."

The next moment Dick caught her fainting form in his arms. Charlie, now that the first shock was over, evinced his latent manhood. He called the servants, and, though faint with grief, bravely assisted Dick to care for Eva.

It was a stricken household. Now Dick Lane had an opportunity to show his honor and character. He was a noble friend and a true comforter.

The news of Colonel Bond's death created a tremendous sensation in the town.

All sorts of wild rumors went flying about. The manner of the millionaire's death gave rise to a report of suicide.

Then all sorts of predictions were made. It was assumed that the Colonel's affairs were tangled and that there was no hope that his son could ever keep the estate out of bankruptcy.

Matters even went so far that there was a small panic in Benham. In this latter the hand of Scott was seen.

The funeral was hardly over when Benham was deluged with reports of impending collapse of the Bond interests.

The Colonel had been the mainstay of the Benham Bank, and his large deposits there had given the bank its prestige. Now, however, panicky depositors started a run on that institution.

Both Charlie and Eva were too deep in their grief to realize just what was going on. But there was a cool head and steady hand at the helm.

Dick Lane rose to meet every emergency. The attorneys for the estate came to him and asked:

"Well, how are the Colonel's affairs, anyway? Are they shaky?"

"It is all a foolish panic," said Dick. "Colonel Bond's estate can pay dollar for dollar and have a magnificent fortune left."

Dick at once went down to the bank and took charge of affairs. A line of depositors were at the teller's window, calling for their money.

The cashier met Dick with troubled face.

"Really," he said, "the Colonel's funds cannot meet this emergency. If he has no other resources this bank must collapse."

Dick took pen and ink and printed upon a placard:

"Notice to Depositors:

"Every depositor in the Benham Bank can be paid in full and enough surplus will be left to run the bank entirely without outside deposits. The bank is sound."

This notice was placed in the window. The cashier shrugged his shoulders and said:

"That is all very fine if true."

"It is true."

"We have not the money."

"You will have," replied Dick, as he produced the bundle of papers left by Colonel Bond. "Here is a power of attorney for me to sign checks and receive and disburse all moneys of the Bond estate. I will make you a draft at once upon the National Park Bank of New York for two hundred thousand dollars!"

The cashier gasped.

"That is nearly as much as the total amount owing the depositors!" he said.

"Quite right!" agreed Dick, as he filled out the draft. "Now you can see that I am right."

In a few hours the draft was answered by telegram. The next day the money came, and the Benham Bank was able to meet all demands.

This victory had a far-reaching moral effect.

Dick remembered his pledge to Colonel Bond. He met all creditors personally and satisfied them. He met the lawyers and administrators and assumed his position decisively as the head and front of the Bond business.

In a very few days this began to be felt. The mills kept running, everything was the same and confidence began to return.

All manner of queer games were tried to oust Dick from his position. But Colonel Bond had foreseen and provided for this.

Had some of the sharks of lawyers got their grip on the business at that moment, there would have been very poor picking left for the heirs.

In fact one tricky pettifogger in conversation with Dick winked his eye and said knowingly:

"This is a great sinecure, young man. You are a fool if you don't get the best of this plum before you are through."

Dick transfixed the fellow with an icy stare.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"Why, it's all a matter of right and business," said the pettifogger, rubbing his hands. "It's a rich case. If you don't understand getting the spoils which are your just due I will be glad for a trifling interest to show you."

Dick was very angry.

"You mean, sneaking old thing," he cried, with just wrath. "You need not attempt to categorize me with yourself. Do you think I would do anything dishonest?"

"Oh, but it's not dishonest!"

"Yes, it is dishonest! Extortion and exorbitant charges are simple dishonesty, and you know it. I propose to settle this estate, and every dollar will go to the heirs. I always act on the square!"

The pettifogger, deeply abashed, now slunk away. Dick was as good as his word.

He proceeded to straighten affairs out with a master hand. But he accepted no profit.

The tangled case was made clear and simple. Confidence was restored. People came back to the bank with their deposits.

The mills kept on. The great business did not stop. And the master hand was that of Dick Lane.

Colonel Bond had reasoned well. He had chosen a true man.

Through all the Scotts had tried their best to mix matters and secure Dick's overthrow.

They tried to make a panic and depreciate the price of Benham mill stock. But Dick filled the market with buying orders and held the would-be bears at bay.

He was making his mark.

CHAPTER XVII.

SCOTT IS BAFFLED.

It may be understood that the people were not long in recognizing the master ability of Dick Lane.

He became the head and front of financial affairs in Benham. He met his foes on all sides and vanquished them.

Charlie Bond now went into the office, and Dick assisted him in gaining an insight into the business.

Unfortunately the millionaire's son had been given no business education at all. But for all this he was ready and apt and took hold pluckily.

One day a message came from an unexpected source.

It was postmarked at Whiteville and was a letter from Hamilton Scott.

"To Richard Lane, Manager of the Benhamville Mills:

"Dear Sir: I write to inform you that the Whiteville Mills are going to join the State Trust. The result will be a radical cut of one-fifth in the price of their output and a corresponding reduction in wages. It is deemed desirable to request the Benham Mills to follow the example of the Whiteville Mills. If the Benham Mills prove unprofitable let us know, and we will try and induce the trust to absorb you as it has us. Very respectfully,
HAMILTON SCOTT, President."

Dick read this remarkable epistle twice. He was staggered by its wonderful unction and the delightful sangfroid of the writer.

He showed it to Charlie, and a conversation was held. The result was the following reply:

The Benham Mills are running at a profit. They will continue to run without joining any trust, and also the scale of wages will be maintained. There is no necessity for the Whiteville Mill owners to appeal to the State Trust in favor of the Benham. She can take care of herself quite handily. Very truly,
RICHARD LANE, Manager."

This letter had a tremendous effect. The bluff game perpetrated by Scott had not fooled Dick in the least. The Benham Mills kept on just as long as they had orders to fill.

The Whiteville Mills, however, began to receive orders beyond their capacity. The cut of one-fifth in price of manufactured goods naturally drew them the majority of trade.

For a time people in Whiteville were in high spirits.

But the truth was Scott was really selling his goods at less than cost, despite the cut in wages. In thus trying to swamp the Benham Mills, he was really in most immediate danger of swamping himself.

Dick soon found that he must discontinue a certain number of looms. Goods were lying in the storerooms unable to move on account of the cut.

But the young manufacturer was firm and resolute.

"If I reduce prices I shall have to cut wages," he said. "and the working people cannot live on less than I pay them."

This sentiment was fully indorsed by the labor unions. Scott speedily found that he had a new problem to deal with.

This was the very ugly and obstinate problem of labor. A committee waited upon him and demanded that the former rate of wages be restored.

Scott was very angry and very profane. But he found that a refusal meant a serious and perhaps disastrous strike. He had failed in his project.

"I can close the Benham Mills to-morrow," declared Dick. "and wait for a rising market if I choose. It is sure to come. Of course a shut-down means a heavy loss to the estate. But the Whiteville Mills must also lose."

Thus far Scott seemed likely to get the worst of the squeeze. After the cut in wages many of the Whiteville operatives had left and moved to Benham, where they could get better pay.

Altogether matters were getting very critical.

But Scott was very determined and refused to raise the wages.

He had taken heavy orders ahead for work to be delivered at the cut price, and to raise the pay now meant a tremendous loss. So matters hung on.

The result was one day the news came that the operatives at Whiteville were out. There was almost a riot in front of Scott's house.

Aubrey grew frightened and said:

"I say, dad, you're going to get the worst of this, anyway. You aren't doing any injury to Benham. Drop it, I say, and let's try some other game."

"What do you know about business?" snapped Scott, irritably. "Do you suppose I can lower my dignity enough to drop out now?"

"Better lose a little dignity than all your money."

"Why, you young fool, it's as broad as it is long. If I give in to these fools they'll hold it over me."

Aubrey snapped his fingers in despair.

"Well, go on!" he said.

"What else can I do?"

"Cancel the orders you have received. Raise the price of goods and restore wages. Admit you're beaten and then try something else."

Hamilton Scott was silent and thoughtful a long while.

Finally he said:

"Well, Aubrey, I don't know but you are right. Perhaps it is better to acknowledge one defeat than we may gain a greater victory. What is your plan?"

"You know I was once smitten with that girl?"

"Eva Bond!"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"I have got all over it, and now I hate her. At the same time, for the sake of vengeance, I would like to humble her and force her to marry me."

Scott shook his head.

"Confound women!" he declared. "There is no luck in meddling with them. It is better to leave them alone. She won't have you, and you may be sure of it."

"I will compel her."

"How?"

"Leave it to me. Suppose she suddenly disappears. No trace can ever be found of her. Such things happen. The report goes out that she is in the river. That is the end of it. There are plenty of safe places where she may be kept in hiding."

But the elder Scott was obdurate. He would not listen to the abduction theory. Finally he said:

"I have a plan."

Aubrey listened indifferently.

"What is it?"

"You know that the canal and navigation scheme is one of young Lane's pet schemes."

"Yes."

"Well, I have learned that lately the Navigation Company's stock has gone up a point on the rumor that a new canal route around Whiteville had been secured."

Aubrey pricked up at this.

"The deuce you say!" he exclaimed. "Where can that be?"

"The only possible route is by leaving Whiteville entirely out of the course and digging a canal to White Creek, four miles above here. The creek empties into the river two miles below the town and is navigable all that distance."

"Do you think they will do that?" he asked.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I cannot see how they will profit by going so far away from Whiteville. But if they do, our little cake, dad, is nothing but dough."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RIVAL COMPANY.

Hamilton Scott knew his son spoke the truth. Their cake was dough to a certainty.

It did not improve the old rascal's temper to reflect upon it. He fell to cursing in a vigorous way.

"Confound that young Lane," he growled. "He is as full of resources as a nut is full of meat. He has every kind of a game."

He arose and paced the floor a long while. Aubrey puffed at a cigarette and watched his dad through blue wreaths of smoke.

Finally he said:

"Can't no land along the creek be bought?"

"That would do no good."

"Why?"

"They have got the locks and canal rights, and owners of land cannot trouble them in the least."

"How is it that you weren't sharp enough to get onto that deal in time to head it off, dad?"

This angered Scott greatly. He turned upon his son hatefully.

"Why, you young whippersnapper!" he cried. "Do you think I have eyes in the back of my head? Suppose you take up affairs a little yourself?"

"Don't get off the handle, dad," said Aubrey, coolly. "It's no use, you know. If you are going to beat Dick Lane, you've got to keep cool. Why don't you try and beat him at his own game?"

Scott came to a halt.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Why, build a canal yourself and start a rival company, for that matter."

Hamilton Scott gave a mighty start. His face lit up.

"By Jove!" he cried. "That's a bright idea, Aubrey."

"Well, give me credit for it."

"You have struck the keynote."

"Of course I have. If you'll let me steer a little, you'll find I can do it, too."

Aubrey swelled up and puffed away grandiloquently at his cigarette. His father looked at him admiringly.

He sat down and began to make notes.

"Let us see," he began. "It will take them at least three months to cut that canal."

"Yes."

"Now the Navigation Company has been buying steamers and making wharfage. They already have two hundred thousand dollars invested."

"That is true."

"Well and good. As yet their route can go no further than Whiteville. It must be our business to hold it there."

"Just so."

"Now I will at once organize the Whiteville and Atlantic Company. We will put two steamers a day on the river and scoop all the trade and all the privileges between Whiteville and the sea. This can be done before the Benham line can even get its canal dug."

"Hurrah!" shouted Aubrey. "That will bring them to terms. They can freight no further than to Whiteville at a profit, and we will control the lower river and the biggest part of the line."

Father and son were so exuberant that they joined hands and danced about the office.

"You have hit the nail on the head, Aubrey!" cried the delighted parent. "Nothing could be better. We will bring them to terms. As for the girl——"

"She must be mine!"

"Well, the way to bring her to terms is to effect the ruin of the Bond estate. When the Bonds are brought down to abject poverty she will kneel at your feet."

Thus the conspiracy was formed. It was true, as Hamilton Scott had declared, that the Navigation Company had secured a new waterway around Whiteville by means of the creek.

Dick had made all arrangements for the excavation to begin at once.

Several hundred laborers were put upon the job and the work of excavation went on rapidly.

But while this was progressing a sudden startling report reached Benham.

New steamers had appeared on the river below Whiteville. New wharves and storehouses were building there. Then the truth came out.

Hamilton Scott had played his trump card. Dick saw the game at once and realized what he had to contend with now.

It was not likely that two companies would make it profitable on the river. Of course the company which started in first would get the prestige and most of the trade.

Hamilton Scott had the start, and therefore the advantage.

It was certainly a victory for Scott. He was immensely jubilant. The steamers were a success from the start. They carried great loads of freight and passengers.

This showed that Dick's foresight and judgment were of the best. The young manufacturer and promoter was very much disappointed, though.

However, he recognized the fact that competition is the spirit of trade and at once made plans to offset this advantage.

The steamers placed upon the river by Scott were second-hand, dingy affairs. Dick said nothing, but proceeded to fit out his steamers in palatial fashion.

"It's all right," he said. "Scott has as much right to run a steamer line as we have. But I am going to bid for some of the trade."

The canal was soon finished. One day steam was got up on the "Queen," one of the two steamers of the Benham line, and she swung out into the river.

On board her was a party of the stockholders of the line, with their families. A band of music played on the deck.

Dick was there also, and so was Eva and Charlie. Everybody was in high spirits, the day was fine, and the first trip over the line seemed destined to be a great success.

Crowds cheered the departure of the Queen. She steamed away down the river in grand shape.

She was a handsome boat and was newly fitted and painted. Her furnishings were fine.

Down through the canal she safely passed and reached the lower river. She was now two miles below Whiteville.

Suddenly as she made a curve in the river the pilot jammed the wheel over hard a-port. The reason for this was apparent.

One of Scott's steamers, the Hamilton, was directly in the course of the Queen, and a collision seemed almost certain.

The passengers were thrilled with terror, ladies screamed and fainted and the confusion was intense.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DISAGREEMENT.

The Queen had whistled repeatedly, in accordance with custom, before reaching this bend. But there had been no answer. The Hamilton, contrary to the rules of navigation, was on the wrong side of the river, which was here wide, with a deep channel.

She had come stealing up under the cover of the bank without whistle or bell, as if on purpose to ram the Queen.

And this seemed inevitable.

The prompt action of the Queen's pilot alone saved a head-on collision. The result would have been frightful to contemplate.

There would certainly have been great loss of life.

There were many ladies on board the Queen. If she had sunk in the deep river many of them could never have reached shore.

Dick was in the pilot house at the time. He gasped and held his breath.

For one full second it seemed as if the bows of the two boats must meet. The result would have been the worse for the Queen than for the Hamilton.

The Queen was a light trim boat and would have been cut in two like a cheese by the heavier, blunt-bowed Hamilton.

But the action of the Queen's pilot was timely.

Just in the nick of time she swerved toward the shore. There was a shock, as her keel grazed the sandbar, but the collision was averted.

There was hardly a foot of water between the two steamers as they passed. The Hamilton's starboard boats and davits were carried away and part of the wheel bridge. Some of the top hamper was also wrecked.

The Hamilton fell off under slackened speed. The Queen came to a stop and half turned.

"Ahoy, there!" came a hail from the Hamilton. "What kind of lubberly work do you call that? We had the right of way."

"No you didn't," retorted Dick, in a trumpet voice. "Nor you didn't answer our whistle."

"You didn't whistle."

"Yes, we did."

"You're a liar!"

"Thank you," replied Dick, sarcastically. "You are quite safe in making that statement where you are."

"I am ready to prove it anywhere and at any time. I know you, Dick Lane."

Dick gave a start.

He recognized the voice now.

"Oh!" he exclaimed to his companions. "I am no longer surprised. It is Aubrey Scott."

"Ask him to go ashore," said Charlie, belligerently. "I'll fight him."

"Not when I am around," laughed Dick. "That's my privilege."

Then he shouted:

"And I know you, Aubrey Scott. If you wilfully again attempt to wreck one of these boats you will find that the law provides a serious punishment for such as you."

"What right have you on this river with your old boat, anyway?"

"As much right as you."

"Going to try and run us out of business, eh?"

"No, I am going to get some of the business you stole from us."

"Bah! You're too late."

"We shall see."

The duel of words was now cut short by Dick himself.

Enough!" he declared. "Let us waste no more time here."

The Queen went on her way. She stopped at the different ports on her way to the sea. But it was found that in spite of her nice appearance she was not likely to be as yet liberally patronized.

"But that's all right," said Dick, in his offhand way. "It will come in time. A villain is at the head of the Whiteville line and such a man cannot succeed."

The rest of the trip was without incident of note.

The Queen made the trip down and up the river.

The next day business began. It came in very slow at first. The Navigation Company was far behind expenses on the first consignment. But the next time it was better. And so on for consecutive times.

There was a certainty that the line could be made to pay in spite of the opposition. A great deal of shouting and vocifer-

ous acclaim came from the Whiteville contingent. They made many coarse jests and boasts of their success.

But Dick only smiled and said:

"Time will tell. Bark is a good dog, but Holdfast is a better one. I think we will score yet."

Good pilots and captains had been secured for the Benham line. The crew were also loyal men.

Day by day the Benham Company gained in its business. Special advantages were offered which the Whiteville Company could not furnish.

Before long there was a tinge of soberness down Whiteville way. The Benham steamers seemed to be getting the trade.

There were very cogent reasons for this. On the Whiteville line rough and incompetent men were employed. Half of the time they were drunk, and at all times coarse and disrespectful.

The freight was handled roughly. No attempt was made to keep the steamers clean. Passengers almost unanimously discontinued going by the Whiteville line.

They preferred the clean, neatly kept boats of the Benham line, where they were courteously treated. Merchants soon preferred to ship by these steamers, for they felt that their goods would be safer.

The Eva and the Queen were the boats of the Benham line. The Hamilton and the Scott were the Whiteville line steamers.

So it came about that business on the Whiteville line went into a sharp decline.

This was not only dismaying but irritating to the Scotts. Father and son met for another discussion.

"Confound that young Lane," gritted the Whiteville magnate. "He seems to have the luck of a Jew. Everything he touches always succeeds."

"He's beating us now all right," said Aubrey, despondently.

"They are doing five times the business we are."

"Whose fault is that?" snapped the elder Scott.

"Well, it's not mine."

"Nor mine."

"Whose is it then?"

They glared at each other. This father and son were not always on the best of terms.

"I hope you don't mean to say it's mine?" said Aubrey, angrily. "I'm sure I've done all I could."

"So have I."

"I don't deny it."

"It's just this way. This little plan of yours, as usual, has not worked."

Aubrey was now angry. This slur was past endurance.

"I don't care if you are my father," he cried. "You're a mean, ungrateful old scamp."

"What!" roared Hamilton Scott, as he leaped to his feet.

"I mean it," cried Aubrey, savagely. "You fell in with the idea and if it has failed it's as much your fault as mine. I believe it's more, for I think you're a luckless old hoodoo, anyway."

"You young scoundrel!" roared Scott, raising his fist. "I'll teach you to insult me in that way."

Inflamed with furious anger, the elder Scott struck Aubrey a tremendous blow between the eyes. He fell in a heap.

CHAPTER XX.

A VILLAINOUS SCHEME.

However much it might have been deserved, it was a cowardly blow which Hamilton Scott dealt his son.

In that moment after he had dealt it he saw his mistake, and shame and horror came over him. The reaction was most powerful.

"Oh, Aubrey, my son!" he cried in anguish, flinging himself down beside the unconscious boy, "believe me, I never meant it. I have been insane!"

Aubrey lay quite still and lifeless. Blood trickled down his face from an ugly cut across the nose.

He was unconscious and the best efforts of his father could not bring him to.

Finally the agonized parent called the servants. Wine and whisky finally revived him.

Aubrey soon recovered, though he was very weak. His father pleaded with him for pardon, but the son was sullenly silent.

"Oh, Aubrey!" pleaded the father. "I was mad, insane! I knew not what I was doing. Only forgive me, and you shall never be sorry. I swear it!"

"I didn't think you'd treat me that way, governor," said the young reprobate, finally. "I've always used you well."

"It was wrong and I am sorry, my boy," cried Scott, penitently. "I was so disappointed and chagrined by the failure of the steamer line—"

"Which wasn't my fault."

"No. It was mine."

"I thought it would win."

"It ought to have, but Satan can't beat that young Lane. He is a cropper and no mistake; but I'll tell you, lad, we will beat him yet."

Aubrey smiled grimly.

"I think you had better suggest the next plan," he said.

Scott smote his hands together.

"I will," he cried.

Aubrey showed interest.

"Ah, what is it?" he asked.

"I think it will win. By Jove, nothing could be better. Yes, it shall be done."

"What is it?"

"Of course our plan is to inflict as heavy a loss as possible upon Lane and so effect his financial ruin."

"If we can."

"Well—we can."

"Do you mean it?"

"I do."

"May I ask how?"

"Certainly. You know how easy it is for river steamers to accidentally catch fire and burn. Accidentally, I mean."

Aubrey's eyes opened wide.

"Oh, governor!" he gasped, "that's a State prison offence!"

"Yes, if caught. Nothing if not caught."

For a time there was silence. Father and son were doing some deep thinking. Finally Aubrey said:

"Who will you hire to do it, and how will they go to work?"

"Who will I hire? Nobody."

"What—you don't mean—"

"Yes. I will do it myself. Then there will be no trouble hereafter. I will disguise myself, get aboard at some small wharf below here and wait until twilight comes. That is about the time the Queen makes up into the river after leaving the canal and making for Benham. Suddenly smoke comes pouring out of the hold. The passengers leap overboard. Perhaps the steamer is beached."

"At any rate she burns. I am all right, for I have provided myself with a life preserver. I jump overboard and swim ashore. It is all done."

"But, of course, they will have insurance on the Queen."

"All right. Allow that they do. While they are rebuilding her or looking for a new steamer our boats will get all the business. See?"

"Capital!" cried Aubrey, gleefully. "Oh, you can scheme a little, dad."

"Well, I ought to. Now, I mean to in this way fire the Eva. and, in fact, every steamer they dare to put on the river. I reckon they'll soon get sick of that sort of business."

"Well, I should say."

"You see, losing so many steamers will scare away their trade, and it will all come back to us."

Aubrey clapped his hands.

"Dad, you are a peach!" he cried. "I never heard the beat of that. I wish you'd let me try the job once."

"No. I prefer to do it alone," declared the elder Scott. "If I fail, I am an old man and my life race is nearly run. It is all right. But you are young."

This heinous plot was consummated. How it was enacted we have yet to see.

For some days matters went on as usual. The Benham steamers still continued to play regularly.

One of the Whiteville steamers had been taken off for lack of patronage. One day Dick boarded the Queen to go down to Portsmouth, which was the seaport town at the end of the route.

The Queen cleared the canal and made her way safely to Portsmouth. On her return she stopped at a small landing in the forest, which here came down to the river's edge.

A queer-looking man, with green goggles and a carpet-bag, got on here.

He at once retired to his stateroom and was not seen again. Dick quite forgot the incident.

There was a large complement of passengers aboard. Among them were many women and children. Dick had noticed this curiously.

Thus matters were when a startling thing happened. One of the crew sent up a cry from below.

"Ahoy! The ship is on fire!"

"Fire!"

The terrible word ran through the boat. It went from lip to lip and blanched cheeks and chilled hearts. Horror fell upon the souls of all.

Dick for a moment was stunned. Then he pulled himself together and became the leading spirit.

He rushed to the hatch and saw a thin column of smoke come filtering up. At the same moment he detected a peculiar smell.

Nothing else can confuse one's olfactory with the odor of kerosene oil. He detected it very plainly. It did not occur to him just then what this might mean.

But he knew one thing.

The steamer never carried oil of any kind in bulk. There was no way that it could impregnate the cargo.

But other considerations claimed his attention just then. He proceeded to act. He knew that precious human lives were at stake.

He knew that if the fire was proved to be beyond control there was no resort but to beach the steamer. But first he would ascertain.

So down into the hold he leaped.

As he struck the bales of cargo and began to look about in the semi-darkness he heard a noise and saw a dark figure glide behind a pile of bales.

"Hello! Hold on there!" he cried. "Who are you?"

He made a lunge forward and grasped the coattails of the unknown. A quick pull brought them face to face. It was the man with the green goggles.

For a moment Dick was too astonished to act. But instinctively he knew he had the incendiary.

"You graceless wretch," shouted Dick. "What do you mean by setting this boat afire. Who are you?"

By way of reply the man with the goggles shot his right fist out like lightning, and Dick went down like a log.

CHAPTER XXI.

TRACKING THE INCENDIARY.

The man with the green goggles had taken Dick wholly off his guard. It was an unexpected move.

The impact of the blow was terrific. A tremendous cut was made in Dick's scalp. He always believed that the villain used a brass knuckle.

For a few moments Dick was wholly unable to move. When he did gain his feet, helping hands were with him, for the crew had invaded the place with a line of hose.

Fortunately the fire department of the Queen was of a high order.

The men were well drilled, and a stream was poured down into the hold, which soon quenched the flames. The fire was quickly out.

The Queen was saved, and no doubt that meant the sparing of many precious and helpless lives.

But Dick searched the boat high and low for the man with the goggles. He could not be found.

It seemed as if the affair was to remain forever a mystery. The intent of the incendiary was plain.

It could not have been plunder, for nothing was taken from the boat. There was but one hypothesis, and this was that the motive of the incendiary was personal hatred and malicious revenge.

That it was a Whiteville man and possibly one of Scott's minions Dick felt sure.

It gave him an uneasy feeling.

The attempt to destroy the Queen convinced Dick that the Whiteville gang were working secretly to undo him. He must be upon his guard.

But there was the unusual uncertainty of dread of a secret foe. It was impossible to tell what the next move would be.

Convinced of this, Dick called the officers and crews of the steamers together and told them of it.

Then he adjured them to be constantly on their guard.

This was the only thing he could do. From that time every passenger was closely scrutinized when he went aboard either boat.

Detectives were employed to be constantly on guard. But these were liable to prove treacherous and easily bought up by the foe.

So Dick trusted largely to his own power of discernment. He was convinced that it was the purpose of the foe to destroy the two steamers.

He spent much of his time aboard them. Thus matters went on without any unusual development for a week.

A number of suspicious men had been spotted, but without result. No second attempt to fire the steamer was made during their trips.

But one evening, as Dick left the mill office after a hard day's drive of business, Charlie Bond met him.

Charlie seemed greatly excited. He looked up and down the street and whispered.

"Dick, there's something up to-night down at the dock. I am sure there will be an attempt to set fire to the steamers."

As it chanced, both the Eva and the Queen were tied up to the docks. Their fires were banked and watches were on deck.

It was not easy to see how an incendiary could get in his deadly work under these circumstances. But Dick was wise enough to ignore nothing.

"Is that so, Charlie?" he exclaimed. "Where do you get your information?"

"I have been doing a little detective work on my own hook," replied Charlie, proudly.

"Good! What have you discovered?"

"I saw a man with a wide slouch hat pulled over his face cross the yard and hide behind a pile of lumber. I followed him, but he had gone when I got there. But I found this."

Charlie held up a bottle of fluid. Dick applied it to his nostrils.

"Why, it is filled with kerosene," he said.

Charlie nodded and cried:

"That is just it. Now what would an ordinary man be doing around there with kerosene?"

"You have seen the incendiary?" said Dick, positively. "Do you think you would know him if you should see him again?"

"Anywhere," replied Charlie.

"Then we will look for him. He is certainly in town."

"I'm with you, Dick."

"You did well, Charlie," said Dick in terms of praise.

"Many of the crack detectives have failed to find even the very slightest clew."

"Well, I reckon he's the bird."

"Oh, certainly. He is hanging around the docks waiting his chance. Never you mind. We'll trap him."

"What shall we do?"

"Do you remember where you found this bottle of kerosene?"

"Quite well."

"Take it back, then, and leave it there. He'll be back to look for it later on."

Charlie was surprised.

"Do you think so?" he asked. "Perhaps I'd ought to have left it there in the first place."

"Oh, no; that's all right. Only when he comes back for it we must pounce upon him."

Charlie was carried away with the scheme. He returned the bottle of kerosene to its hiding-place.

Dick now proceeded on the assumption that every bird returns to its own nest. He was sure the incendiary would return for the kerosene.

So Dick and Charlie waited. Time passed by rapidly. It was midnight, and the two watchers were waiting patiently when there came an end to the suspense.

A rustling sound was heard at the end of the pile of lumber. A dark figure glided along stealthily and picked up the bottle of kerosene.

Charlie would have pounced upon him at once, but Dick restrained him. The two youths watched the man's movements.

He seemed to listen intently for a while. Then he glided down the wharf and paused in the shadows just under the hull of the Eva.

Again he listened and looked intently around.

The watch was pacing the deck, but the shadows were too dark for him to see the crouching figure on the wharf.

Suddenly the incendiary leaned across the space between the boat's hull and the wharf and pushed open a port which, purposely or not, had been left unfastened.

The next moment he glided through this like a silent, evil shadow. The crisis had come.

CHAPTER XXII.

REPENTANCE.

When the unknown incendiary disappeared from view through the Eva's port Dick realized that the time for action had come.

So he whispered:

"Charlie, run for the police as quick as you can. I will watch here."

"All right!"

Charlie sped away at full speed. Dick waited a moment. Then he decided to act.

He went to the gangway and crept upon the deck. Instantly he was hailed.

"Who is there?" asked the watch.

"Easy!" said Dick, in a whisper. "You know who I am."

"Oh, it is you, Mr. Lane?"

"Yes. Look here, Fogarty, who is bow watch?"

"Jack Sims."

Well, see him at once and tell him to guard the forward hatch. Now, you come with me."

"All right, sir."

"Are you armed?"

"A revolver, sir."

"Give it to me."

Dick took the weapon. Then he led the way back to the wharf. He paused at the port through which the incendiary had vanished.

Very carefully he crept in through it. He was in the lower hold of the vessel.

All was dark as Egypt.

Dick felt his way along silently. It was not an easy task. At any moment he might make a noise and warn the bird.

Suddenly he saw a little slender thread of light just ahead. Across it a dark form hurried and came toward him.

He knew what it meant.

The incendiary had fired the ship and was now making his escape. Dick waited until he was close upon him.

He then slid one foot forward. The incendiary tripped and went flat upon his face.

An oath rolled from his lips. But Dick was upon him and pressed the cold muzzle of the revolver to his temple, saying:

"Move an inch, and you're a dead man."

The incendiary lay still.

The cold steel was enough to cow him. Then Dick shouted for Fogarty.

But just at that moment loud voices and hurrying footsteps were heard on the wharf. The port cover was flung open and the rays of a dark lantern shone in.

"All right!" sang out Dick. "Here I am. I've got the bird."

Into the hold tumbled the officers. They slipped manacles on the prisoner, who was masked.

No sooner, however, had they done this than Dick started for the line of fire in the further hold. It was a time fuse, which was so arranged that after a sufficient lapse of time to allow the incendiary to escape the fuse would fall into the oil and set the flames going.

Dick put out the fuse and thus the attempt to burn the Eva was frustrated.

Meanwhile the officers had taken their prisoner back to the wharf. Here he was deprived of his mask.

The surprise in store for the captors was a most thrilling one.

As one of the officers flashed the light of a dark lantern in his face, Dick and Charlie gave an astonished cry.

"Whew!" cried Dick, in sheer amazement. "It is Hamilton Scott!"

There was no disputing the fact.

It was the Whiteville magnate caught in a vile and horrible crime. The astonishment of his captors was great. For a time dead silence reigned.

Scott was pale as death, but very defiant. He glared at his captors in a sullen manner of hatred.

"Mr. Scott," said Dick, with an effort, "this is a great surprise. I never would have believed this of a man of your standing."

"I had to do something desperate," said Scott, huskily. "You are doing your best to ruin me."

"You are mistaken," replied Dick.

"Am I? Aren't your steamers getting all the river trade?"

"Did you not start your line to cut mine out?" retorted Dick. "Have we done anything that is not fair in competition?"

The officers stood by respectfully. One of them now said:

"It is for you to say, Mr. Lane. Shall we arrest the man?"

At this Scott's spirit was broken. When he considered his position, when the awful truth dawned upon him that the worst of disgrace and infamy hung over him, he could stand out no longer.

"Oh, what have I done? Mercy on me! Mercy, I say! I am ruined! I did not know what I was doing. Do not arrest me! Don't take me to prison, Dick Lane! I repent! I will be your slave hereafter if you will spare me."

With abject pleading and miserable mien, Hamilton Scott sank down upon his knees on the pier.

"Come, get up," said one of the officers, roughly. "It's too late to come that kind of a game."

But Dick put out his hand.

"Wait a moment," he said.

Then he addressed Scott.

"Mr. Scott," he said, in a voice of steel. "did you have anything to do with the fire on board the Queen a short while ago?"

"Oh, no, no!" wailed the villain.

"Yes, you did," said Dick, sternly. "You had much better confess. You were the man with the green goggles."

Scott begged abjectly.

"Oh, forgive me! Pardon me! Have mercy!" he pleaded.

"Confess," said Dick, relentlessly. "Were you not the man?"

"Yes," admitted Scott. "I confess it all."

"Did you ever reflect upon the enormity of such a crime?" asked Dick. "Did it never occur to you that to be caught meant ruin, almost death? Did you consider the helpless lives which you might have sent to an awful death on board that steamer?"

"Oh, I was mad, stark mad!" declared Scott, abjectly. "I promise you, Dick, never to cross your path again. We will henceforth be friends. Only spare me. Do not reveal this secret. I will take my steamers off the river. I will give you the right to the first canal, and from this time on I will swear to be your best friend. There shall be no more feud between Benham and Whiteville."

Dick was silent a long while. He paced the wharf slowly. Then he suddenly paused.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have all heard what Mr. Scott has said."

The police officers nodded assent, as did the watchman. Charlie had listened to all with interest. Now he whispered to Dick:

"I don't want to see him punished, Dick. I should let him go."

"He has already received great punishment," said Dick, in an undertone. "I will talk further with him."

Then aloud he said:

"Mr. Scott, when I started out in life I adopted a motto. It is to be always 'on the square.' Now, I have no personal animosity to subserve. You have been the most implacable enemy of Mr. Bond and myself. That is a well-known fact."

"I do not ask that you take your steamers off the river at any loss to yourself. We will, if you choose, consolidate the line. If you really mean what you say, all can be done without loss to you or the estate of Mr. Bond."

"Your proposal to abolish the feud between Benham and Whiteville meets with my most cordial sympathy. I will meet you more than half way. You shall see that we can be magnanimous and fair. I know you will be the same."

"You have done wrong. You have even gone almost to the verge of staining your soul with the awful crime of murder. But all men are sinners. If one is forgiven all should be. So you are forgiven."

"Oh, Dick," cried the repentant magnate, fulsomely.

"Wait a moment," said Dick, in a softer voice. "I am going to accept you as wholly sincere. I ask no further pledge than your word."

"You have my sacred oath."

"Very good. Now go right along as you will. Every one present is sworn to secrecy and will never speak of the incident of this night again. Your character is safe. Keep it henceforth above reproach. Officer, you may take off the handcuffs."

"Then you will not prosecute?"

"No."

The officer obeyed and removed the handcuffs. Hamilton Scott stood free. He removed his slouch hat and stood with bared head before his generous rival and erstwhile foe.

He gripped Dick's hand fervently and then strode away. The affair was ended.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AUBREY PLAYS HIS HAND.

The next day Aubrey Scott turned into the office of the Whiteville mills. He was smoking a cigarette and his eyes were swollen with a previous night's carousal with some friends.

The elder Scott sat at his desk with grave face and manner. He looked like a changed man.

It seemed as if the florid hue in his face had grown softer and the lines were deeper. The old, insolent light in his eyes were gone.

"Hello, governor," said Aubrey, as he blew rings from the cigarette. "What's the go this morning?"

The elder Scott looked up into his son's face. The expression in his father's eyes gave Aubrey a shock.

He had never seen it there before. He dropped his cigarette and gasped:

"What's wrong, governor? You look as if you had been to a funeral."

"Aubrey," said his father, "sit down here a moment."

Aubrey wonderingly obeyed.

"My boy," said the magnate, in a curious tone, "I have awakened of a sudden to a very powerful realization."

Aubrey's eyes opened wide.

"The deuce you have?" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"I can see that I have never done the right thing by you."

The young reprobate grinned.

"Well, I'm glad you've taken a tumble at last," he said slangily. "I think it is about time, as long as I'm your only son."

"Yes," said Scott, thoughtfully. "You are my only son. And I love you, Aubrey, with all a father's love. Now, I have something important to tell you. I have decided upon a complete change in my mode of life, and I want you to join me."

Again Aubrey stared.

"Are you a little out this morning, governor?" he asked. "Too much sherry?"

"Aubrey, I wish you would speak more respectfully to me. I am very serious."

"Yes, you look so. About as serious as you are in your promise to burn the Benham steamers."

Scott turned ghastly pale.

"Aubrey!" he exclaimed huskily, "I want to tell you that your father came very near the edge of an abyss last night. If I had gone over the edge, we would have been ruined forever."

Aubrey spat at a fly on the carpet.

"Well, that's all Greek to me," he declared. "What are you driving at, anyway? I can't make you out."

"Listen, and I will tell you."

With this the elder Scott proceeded to narrate to his hopeful son all the incidents connected with the attempt to fire the Eva. Aubrey listened intently.

His face clouded as his father drew near the end.

"Well, I'll be doggoned," he exclaimed. "You made a fine botch of that job. But I must say you put up a good bluff on them to get free."

"Aubrey, it was no bluff," said his father, earnestly.

Aubrey gasped in surprise.

"You don't mean to say that you were in earnest?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I am."

"And you mean to make up with Dick Lane and the Benham people and call everything off?"

"I mean to atone for my errors of the past," said Hamilton Scott, rigidly. "I have been a villain and so have you. Dick Lane is a noble young man."

"Well, I never," ejaculated Aubrey, in consternation. "Dick Lane has got you hypnotized."

"It makes no difference. There is to be no further feud between us. We mean to consolidate the two steamer lines and the river war is ended."

The elder Scott spoke firmly and resolutely. He arose and put on his hat.

"Where are you going?" said Aubrey, warily.

"I am going up to Benham."

"What for?"

"To talk over the consolidation with Dick Lane and the trustees of the Bond estate," replied Scott.

"So that's the way of it," said Aubrey, quietly. He followed his father to the door. "Well, good-by, governor. I suppose the next thing we know you'll have moved Whiteville up the river to consolidate it with Benham."

"Don't talk that way, Aubrey," said his father, reprovingly. "I feel that I owe everything to Dick Lane. I might have been in prison to-day but for his magnanimity. I want you to make friends with him also."

"When I do," said Aubrey, with a significant leer, "it will

be when you are some years older. I never forgive a foe or forget an injury. So long, governor."

After his father had gone, Aubrey sat down at the desk and began to overhaul a pile of papers.

He pulled out everything in the desk in his search. Finally he went to the safe and tried the combination.

But he failed in this.

He smoked a number of cigarettes and grew extremely uneasy. Then he began to mutter in a maudlin way.

"Money," he whispered. "Money is what I want. Confound this country. I hate it. I want to go abroad. I have no luck here, for that Lane is going to run everything. The girl is lost. Everything is lost."

He sat down at the desk again. His father's checkbook caught his eye.

He turned over the stubs. A sudden idea had come to him.

"Let me see," he said, taking up a pen. "The governor's handwriting and mine are much alike. I'll try it."

He proceeded to fill out a check, imitating his father's hand. It was made payable to bearer and was for fifty thousand dollars.

"That will take me abroad," he mused with satisfaction. "The governor will be mad for a time, but he'll get over it. I'll do it."

It was easy work for him to affix his father's name to the check. The imitation of the signature was complete.

He left the office and went hurriedly down to the bank.

Here, Mr. Perley," he said brusquely to the cashier. "Father is in a great hurry for this money. Will you please give it to me at once."

The cashier glanced at the check and said in a matter of fact way:

"How does he want it? In one thousand dollar bills?"

"Yes, but with one thousand in small bills," said the young reprobate. The money was paid over the counter.

It made a large roll. But Aubrey tucked it away in his coat pocket and went out upon the street hastily.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHICH ENDS THE STORY.

Hamilton Scott took the cars and ran up to Benham. It was the first time in years that he had visited the place in a friendly capacity.

He proceeded at once to the mill office.

As he entered he met Dick. The young financial manager of the Bonds took him by the hand warmly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Scott," he said cordially. "I am glad to see you. How are matters at Whiteville?"

"Progressing nicely, thank you," replied Scott. "I thought I would come up and see you on business."

"Very good. I am very happy to serve you."

And Dick proceeded to put his visitor at ease. There was no show of embarrassment, nor was the affair of the night before mentioned.

This matter-of-fact, natural way affected by Dick at once healed the breach and won Scott over completely. Much flattered and gratified, the Whiteville magnate thought he had never met a more affable, friendly young man.

"I have come up to see about the consolidating of our steamer lines," said Scott. "Now what is your plan?"

"Have you an inventory of your stock and values?" asked Dick.

"Yes, right here."

"What does it represent?"

"Well, at a low figure, I think, one hundred thousand dollars."

"That will reimburse you?"

"Fully."

"Very good," said Dick. "If you wish to pool with us, we will accept a bill of sale and turn over to you stock of that value in the Navigation Company as consolidated."

"For the full amount?"

"Yes."

"Without appraisal?"

"Certainly. I will accept your word," replied Dick, generously. "I feel sure you will act on the square."

Hamilton Scott was much affected.

"Yes," he declared, "you may be very sure of that. I will never act otherwise. You are very kind and generous."

"That is only fair," said Dick, pleasantly. "Henceforth, you know, we are partners."

For a long while they chatted and in the end all arrangements were made for the consolidation.

When Hamilton Scott went back home that evening he was in a very happy state of mind. But alas! He little knew the shock which was awaiting him.

He did not go to the office, but to his house. He retired without inquiring for Aubrey, of whose whereabouts he never knew but little.

The next morning one of the servants came to him and said:

"Do you think anything has happened to Mr. Aubrey, sir? He did not come home last night."

Scott was startled.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Do you mean that, Jacobs?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is he not in his room?"

"No, sir."

"Well, see that the matter is investigated. I will go down to the office and see if he left word there."

Somewhat anxiously, Hamilton Scott put on his coat and went downtown. As he entered the office, however, the sight which met his gaze gave him a mighty start.

The floor was covered with papers abstracted from the desk. All was disorder and confusion. It was yet early for the office boy.

"What is this?" exclaimed Scott in surprise. "Have thieves been at work here?"

He at once proceeded to investigate. Almost the first thing his eye fell upon was the open checkbook. Then he felt weak and faint.

A suspicion of the possible truth dawned upon him.

Mechanically he went to a telephone in one corner of the room. He called up the bank cashier.

"Mr. Perley," he asked, "did any one present a check at the bank yesterday signed by me?"

"Yes."

"For how much?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

Scott wiped the cold sweat from his brow. The next question was his hardest one.

"Who presented it?" he asked.

"Your son, sir."

"All right. Good-day."

He hung up the telephone receiver and staggered to his desk. He fell into a chair and for a long while gave himself up to his emotions.

"It is all my fault," he moaned. "I did not bring him up right. Oh, if Aubrey were only like Dick Lane. But he is my son, and if he comes back I must forgive him."

It was many years before Aubrey Scott returned to his home. When he did return his father had passed from earth. But to his credit be it said, that Aubrey reformed and ever after lived an exemplary life. How much of this was due to Dick Lane's example, the reader may imagine.

But little more remains to be told. Matters went on flourishingly with the Consolidated Navigation Company.

Dick had been five years at the head of the Bond estate, when one day a meeting of the trustees was called.

Charlie was twenty-one years of age and, as provided by the will, he was now to come into possession and control of all the property.

The papers were quickly made out and the transfer legalized. Then Charlie said:

"I want new papers made out. From this hour Dick Lane is my partner."

Congratulations were in order. Dick very modestly received them. The people were all delighted to know that he was to become one of the firm.

But this was not the only partnership which he formed. The reader doubtless can guess the other.

It was for life and involved the happiness of two people, who had from the first cared deeply for each other. Eva Bond one day became Dick's blushing and happy bride.

What more joy can we wish him? With fair fame, fortune and a pretty wife his life's ambitions were realized. And all this because he made it a firm principle to always act on the square.

Next week's issue will contain "SAM AND HIS SHADOW; OR, THE MYSTERY OF THE OTHER BOY." By Berton Bertrew.

CURRENT NEWS

Mrs. Elmira White, of Protem, Mo., who has lived to be 112 years old, has just celebrated her birthday. "Corn bread is the secret of a long life," says Mrs. White. "I have eaten corn bread for many years, and now, old as I am, I am able to take a walk of three miles every day."

While a smith in the Beaumont blacksmith shop, Corning, Cal., was shoeing a mule in the shoeing stock the animal died. The shoer had nailed on three shoes and was finishing the last when, noticing the animal was unusually quiet, he discovered it to be dead.

A bull eleven months old, weighing less than 200 pounds and standing barely two feet in height, is to be seen on the farm of F. A. Terry, a live stock dealer of Rosalia, Wash. The animal is fully developed and has horns more than three inches long. It is part Jersey and some other short-horn breed.

Five years ago the Duke of Devonshire's head gardener at Chatsworth, named Chester, England, died and left nearly \$24,000. No will was found, and distant relatives in Australia ultimately claimed the money. This week a will was found during repairs on a ceiling of the gardener's house. He left his money to his housekeeper, who lives near Chatsworth.

Flags were placed on many New York graves in the cemetery at Sayville, L. I., on Memorial Day. Since then the flags have been disappearing one by one. Determined to catch the guilty person, the sexton hid behind a monument. Finally a large black dog trotted into the cemetery, went to a grave, seized the flag in his teeth and ran off with it. The sexton pursued, but the dog escaped.

Louis Morris, champion fried egg eater of Berkshire, Mass., lost his wager in not being able to eat twenty-five fried eggs in a contest at a lunch car at Housatonic. After eating seventeen eggs Morris was attacked by acute indigestion and a physician worked over him for an hour before he was restored to consciousness. Morris' record is thirty fried eggs and his green corn record is fifty-four ears.

Heavy sentences were passed recently on mutineers who took part in the demonstration at Rodez, France, against the plan to extend the period of army service to three years. The demonstration at Rodez was more serious than at other places. It was quelled only by Major Angelby seizing a rifle and threatening to shoot the first man who left the barracks. Three of the soldiers were condemned by the court-martial to five years imprisonment, one to four years, three to three years, one to two years, two to one year, one to six months and two to four months.

Senator Kenyon, of Iowa, recently introduced a bill aimed to prevent abuse of the franking privilege. It was called forth by the recent disclosures before the lobby com-

mittee of the wholesale use of the franking privilege to send arguments of special interests through the mails free. Mr. Kenyon's bill provides that after January 1, 1914, no mail shall be carried without a special stamp to be supplied to Government officials by the Postmaster General, who at the beginning of each regular session must report to Congress the amount of such special stamps supplied by him to every individual.

John D. Rockefeller has adopted the Scotch plan of mowing the grass on his golf course. Lately a shipment of 400 Southdown sheep reached Tarrytown. The sheep were sent by automobile truck to Pocantico Hills. Heretofore the lawns of the Rockefeller estate have been trimmed by motor lawn mowers. These are to be discarded. The sheep are to be herded over Mr. Rockefeller's broad acres, fattening themselves and at the same time clipping the grass. They cost about \$6 apiece, or \$2,400 for the herd. The new system will make the business of grass cutting considerably less than it has been.

Edward Tilden, a Chicago packer, recently fulfilled a promise he made twenty-five years ago and entertained every child who could attend at a picnic and circus at his country home in Delavan, Wis. More than 2,800 school children turned out, and when it was over Tilden admitted that it was worth every penny of the \$10,000 it cost. In his boyhood Mr. Tilden lived in Delavan, and once when a circus arrived he failed to get inside the tent. Vowing he would return some day and give every boy in town a treat he left for Chicago. The entertainment included a pony and dog show, vaudeville acts, Punch and Judy show, an aeroplane flight by Jimmy Ward, automobile rides and a big dinner.

In spite of the hue and cry over the high cost of living the import of gems throughout the United States during the fiscal year which ends this month is estimated at \$50,000,000. The figures break all records. Already precious stones of an appraised value of \$43,686,280 have passed through the New York Custom House. The year started in July, 1912, with imports of \$5,547,116, the largest for any month. In 1911 the importation of gems at New York amounted to \$39,445,285, of which amount according to William B. Treadwell, the jewelry examiner, the cut precious stones and pearls totalled \$29,261,794, and the uncut stones, principally diamonds, \$10,183,491, a gain over the highest previous record of about \$4,000,000. There has been a marked increase in the demand for colored stones, and fine Ceylon sapphires of ten and twelve carats have been sold at from \$400 to \$500 a carat since the beginning of the year, when those gems became fashionable. The demand for fine pearls has been unprecedented and there are at present few desirable gems of this kind offered to American dealers. The increase in the price has been correspondingly large.

THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND

—OR—

THE HERO OF THE 7th

By J. P. RICHARDS.

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XI (continued)

Jack Navarro and Freda were standing beneath the shade of the oldest apple tree in the orchard, and the moon, shining full upon his face, revealed a somewhat sad and troubled expression.

"This is the last night I can be with you, Freda," he whispered, holding both her hands within his own.

"For after to-night there will be no more stolen meetings in the orchard. But I tell you one thing—we shall not be apart very long. I fear, however, that unless the trouble out on the frontier soon ends we shall be parted longer than we want to."

"Do you think the 7th will be ordered out, Jack?" she asked, anxiously. "Are matters growing worse instead of better?"

He bowed his head gravely.

"Much worse," he answered. "It seems as though they could not get troops there fast enough. The Indians, aided by thousands of white renegades, spring up like mushrooms when you least expect them. It is a serious situation, indeed."

"I hope you will not have to go, Jack," and something that looked like a flawless diamond rolled slowly down her cheek and fell at her feet, where it lay, a rival to the dew-drops sparkling among the green blades of grass.

"I hope so, too, little girl," very softly, "but you know, Freda, that if I am ordered out I must go. Would you care very much?"

Her answer was given in so low a voice that he could barely distinguish it, but it satisfied him, for the next instant the two faces were very near each other.

"Will you think of me when I am away, Freda?" he asked, in a very low, gentle voice.

"I could not forget you, Jack," was her simple reply, but it meant more than all the vows and protestations could have meant, and he realized it, too.

"And I shall always think of you, little girl," he went on, his voice trembling with emotion. "If I am called away, no matter when or where, your image is the only one that shall ever fill my breast. If it should chance to be in the midst of war and bloodshed, I shall think of you all the more. At night, when the tiny, twinkling stars glow like jewels in the sky, and the silver moon bathes the world in a flood of glory, I shall look at it and wonder if the same luminous rays are kissing your sweet face. Ah, Freda, how kind fate was when she allowed us to meet! But let us hope for the best, dear, and pray that I may not have to leave you at all."

An hour longer they lingered there in the orchard, and it was only fear that causes them to part. All the merriment of an hour before had vanished, and a shadow of sorrow hung over them all. For each one realized that it might be years ere they met again. Yes, it might be forever, and the very thought was filled with sadness.

But it must be so. And the four girls went slowly to the seminary, while the four young men went back to camp, all feeling as if the brightness of the fair summer night had been suddenly darkened by a heavy cloud.

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN HOME.

The next morning found the seminary a scene of bustle and active preparation. Trunks were being packed, cabs were continually rattling back and forth along the tree-bordered drive that led to the house, there were tearful farewells, kisses and vows of schoolgirls' friendship (and as a general rule we all know how long it lasts) and then the old building was empty save for Freda and Winona. They were the last to leave, and as they sat in the former's room, which had been the scene of many a jolly time, both felt more like crying than laughing, though they made a brave attempt to appear cheerful.

"Brace up, Fred, and be a man, that is, be as near one as you can," Winona said, with a nervous laugh. "As for me, I'm mighty glad the year is ended. Now I can gratify my ambition, and study for the stage as I have always wanted to. I never saw the use of graduating from this stupid hole anyway. The only reason I am glad that I ever came here is because I met you, and—Dick, of course," she added, with a blush.

Freda said nothing for a few moments, and then as the rumble of wheels on the gravel drive outside reached her ears she started up with a half sob.

"It's all over with at last, Win," she said in a strange sort of husky voice. "The dear old days are dead and gone forever—buried in the grave of the past—and we are going to part now in a few moments, each to go our separate way. But I know you will never forget me. Heaven grant that when we go down to the grave our friendship will be as firm and lasting as it is to day! It would break my heart were we to grow cold and careless toward each other."

"We shall never do that, Fred, don't you worry," and Winona brushed away a few tears. "But don't talk in that strain unless you want me to blubber like a big calf. Be the same jolly good fellow you have always been. Why, you will sit in a box at Palmer's yet, and say that your old pard is the greatest actress in America. I thought Dolly Glutton would drown me the way she hung about my neck and howled, but when I slipped a box of caramels into her hand, she brightened up like a big sunflower. Bless her old heart anyway. And Adelaide insisted upon standing directly before, with her eyes rolled heavenward like a dying calf, while she warbled 'Far Away.' Hang it, I wish—but never mind. It will be many a day before the old school will have another such jolly quartette."

At that moment Madam La Rue appeared upon the scene to inform Miss Avery that the cab was waiting, and with one farewell embrace the two friends parted, little dreaming under what circumstances they would meet again.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

James H. Wheat, blacksmith, of Reagor Springs, tugged and strained in trying to get a shoe on his foot a few mornings ago. When he shook the shoe to see whether there was anything in it a garter snake, crushed but still very much alive, fell out. Wheat killed the snake with the assistance of his wife.

Plans for the new Equitable Life Assurance Society's building, at No. 120 Broadway—the site of the old one that was destroyed by fire eighteen months ago—were approved by Fire Commissioner Johnson. The new building will be fireproof and thirty-six stories, with more floor space than any other structure in New York. Plans will be ready to submit to the builders in a week.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, has found an honest man. He has received a letter inclosing a lead pencil. Here is the letter: "Watertown, N. Y., June 1, 1913.—Hon. F. D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Washington, D. C.—Dear Sir: Inclosed find your pencil which you left on the stand after you wrote your telegram. Yours respectfully, A. L. Wechsler."

Pleading guilty to using the mails to defraud and having collected life insurance on the supposed deaths of persons who never existed, William Vokolek, an attorney of Pittsburgh, Pa., was sentenced by District Judge John E. Sater to serve eighteen months in the penitentiary at Moundsville, W. Va. It is said that charges are pending against Vokolek in several other States in connection with what is known as the "graveyard insurance scheme."

Stricken with convulsions at the lonely cable station on Fanning Island, Dr. Herbert Metcalfe, resident surgeon, died in three days, in spite of the cabled prescriptions of the nearest physician, 2,000 miles away, at Fiji. Employees of the cable company, returning on the steamer Sierra, brought news of the surgeon's death. Only a score of Europeans live on Fanning Island, and none knew how to treat the invalid. For three days hourly bulletins of Dr. Metcalfe's condition were cabled to Fiji, and the doctor there cabled back instructions.

The Italian automobilist, Zuccarelli, was killed outright, recently, and his mechanic, Fanelli, was mortally injured while they were trying out a machine for the French Auto Club Grand Prix contest in July. The accident occurred at Marcilly, fifteen miles from Evreux, France. Zuccarelli was speeding at a hundred miles an hour, when a horse and cart emerged from a sunken crossroad. The automobile drove right through the obstruction, but was overturned, pinning the occupants beneath. Zuccarelli won the Grand Prix for light automobiles at Le Mans in September, 1912. He had only recently returned from the United States.

Mr. Englebach, an English author, in a new volume on humors of the law, relates the following queer bit of history: "Some years ago men used to walk about openly in Westminster Hall with a piece of straw in their boot. By this sign attorneys knew that such persons were in want of employment as false witness, and would give any evidence required for money. For instance, if an advocate wanted an obliging witness he would go to one of these men and show him a fee, which, if not sufficient, the witness would not take any notice of. The fee was then increased until its weight recalled the power of memory to a sufficient extent. By this they derived their name, 'Men of Straw.'"

One of the most remarkable signs of the awakening of China is afforded by the spread of European engineering methods in that country. The railroad between Peking and Kaigan, opened a couple of years ago, was constructed exclusively by Chinese labor under the sole direction of native engineers. The Chinese do not hesitate to construct cuttings and tunnels in the modern fashion. One of their tunnels passes under the famous Great Wall, the demolition of which was begun a short time ago. It has been observed that, while the Chinese students of engineering resort to America and Europe for instruction, as soon as they return to China they emancipate themselves from foreign tutelage and attack their problems for themselves. They show wonderful capacity in comprehending the practical sciences of the Occident and are especially notable for their mathematical ability.

President Ban Johnson's war against betting on baseball games at American League parks was opened at the Polo Grounds, the other afternoon, when four alleged Boston bookmakers were refused admission and a number of spectators were ejected from the grand-stand. President Frank J. Farrell, of the Yankees, got the tip from Boston that a number of operators, who had been driven out of business at Fenway Park, were on the way to New York. Private detectives guarded the entrances against the alleged undesirables. Another force of detectives was scattered through the stand with orders to eject spectators found offering to lay a bet. About a dozen men were led out of the grand-stand to the club offices where, after having their admission refunded, they were politely requested to leave and remain away from the Polo Grounds indefinitely. The action of the local American League management was made in concert with other teams of the league. At Boston, Washington and Philadelphia the same sort of plan was pursued. Ban Johnson has put it squarely up to the club presidents to rid American League parks of betters of all kinds. Accused of making bets on the Philadelphia-Cleveland baseball game, recently, thirty-eight spectators were arrested in the grand-stands and bleachers in Shibe Park. The prisoners were taken to City Hall in patrol wagons and were held there for a hearing in the night court.

On the Wheel for a Fortune

—OR—

The Wonderful Adventures of a Boy Bicyclist

By WILLIAM WADE.

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XII (continued)

While his apprehensions increased, he called again, and louder than before. Hester did not reply. He repeated his call. It was all in vain. The echo of his own voice came back to him, but that was all.

Horace's alarm then took tangible form. He thought some harm had befallen Hester, but what? Had an enemy climbed over the wall and surprised, perhaps slain her? He dared not think this. Filled with such fears as he had not yet known, he ran back to the cabin.

Sylvia had heard him calling for Hester. She suspected the truth, and she met him at the door with eager questions.

"Hester is not at the barricade. I cannot find her. I have called in vain. Give me the lantern. I must look for her. I cannot understand what can have become of her," he answered.

Sylvia handed him the ready lighted lantern.

"I will go with you. I cannot stay here alone now that I fear—oh, I know not what I fear! Can there be an enemy in the valley?" she said.

"I hope not. I think not. I do not believe a foe could have scaled the barricade unknown to Hester while she was there," replied Horace.

Then he and the young girl left the cabin. They went straight to the barricade. Horace flashed the light around. But he saw no trace of any one. Then he and Sylvia began a search all along the mountainside.

They called the name of Hester frequently, but she answered not.

At last the boy and girl came back to the pass, and they were completely at a loss to account for the strange disappearance of Hester.

They stood looking at each other blankly. Neither had any suggestions to offer. All at once Horace looked down. The earth, just inside the barricade, was nude of vegetation, and soft and yielding. As the lad looked he saw the imprints of Hester's moccasins—they were small and slim. Almost instantly he saw another pair of human footprints.

An exclamation uttered by the lad, as he made the last discovery, caused Sylvia to look down. She too saw Hester's footprints, and the others.

She knew at a glance that they were not the footprints of Horace or herself, for they had been made with large heavy boots, such as miners wore.

"Someone has been here, a white man—a miner! Oh, Horace, I fear the worst for my dear old nurse. The stranger may have murdered her. Buckley's men had been miners. They wore such heavy boots as must have made these strange tracks," cried the girl, and she came close to the lad, while she looked about in the darkness, shuddering.

"I fear you are right. And now if there is an enemy inside the barricade our situation is most desperate. But

the man must be alone. Granted that he had companions and that he surprised and overpowered Hester, others would have scaled the wall. Then they would have reached the cabin before this, I think," he said.

They crouched down beside the wall.

Horace put out the lantern's light.

There they watched and waited in the darkness for what the passing moments might bring forth.

An hour went by; nothing occurred and they heard no sounds which they were not accustomed to hear.

The suspense became less intense for them as the time went by, but the mystery did not become clearer.

Horace was looking toward the cabin some time later when all at once he saw a tall, dark figure—that of a powerful-looking man—pass between him and the light that streamed from the window.

At the same time tap! tap! tap! sounded a rap, like a signal, on the rocks above his head.

CHAPTER XIII.

"ALONE! ALONE!"

Sylvia too saw the dark figure of the strange man pass before the cabin window, and to her hearing came the sound of tapping upon the rocks which Horace heard.

The stranger vanished into the darkness beyond the window instantly, and Sylvia grasped the arm of her boyish companion, saying in an alarmed whisper:

"You saw him? You heard the noise upon the rocks?"

"Yes, yes! and I fear Buckley's men are already in the valley, yet I cannot tell how they have managed to reach it. Surely no one has scaled the barricade. Can it be there is some way of entering the valley which is unknown to Hester?" Horace replied.

"It seems it must be so. Oh, now that we know—know beyond all possibility of doubt that there is some one in the valley, had we not better try to escape under cover of darkness? We could break down an opening in the wall and flee upon your wheel," suggested the terrified girl.

"If the enemy is at hand," said Horace, striving to be calm and cool, "you may be sure they have taken precautions to prevent our escape. Buckley is too cunning to leave the way for our flight unguarded. No. We must remain here."

Again the strange tapping sounded upon the rocks above their heads, and to the imperiled ones it was like a knell to all their hopes.

They looked up at the frowning ledges whence the sound came, but the darkness was impenetrable, and they saw nothing.

"Even if Buckley's men are in the valley, they have not as yet taken possession of the cabin. With foes inside the barricade, our position is too exposed here. We shall be more secure in the cabin," Horace went on.

"Yes. We can fasten the door. Let us go at once," she assented.

Horace took her hand in his, and they went forward in the direction of the cabin stealthily, half expecting to see an enemy start up from behind every bush and tree they passed.

(To be continued)

NEWS PARAGRAPHS

Charged with hitching his son Frank, twelve years old, to a cultivator alongside a mule and working him in the field in a temperature of 120 degrees in the sun, John Freismuth, of Campbell, Wis., was sought on a warrant issued on complaint of the state humane office.

Emile Dubonnet and Welby Jourdan, two aeronauts who were taking part in a long distance balloon race from Paris, were picked up, recently, by a tug twenty-two miles south of Ventnor, on the south coast of the Isle of Wight. They were clinging to the wreckage of their balloon, which had collapsed.

A French naval lieutenant at Brest, France, has been sentenced to two months' imprisonment and fined \$200 for conducting an opium-smoking den for use by officers and women. A man named Lardenors was sentenced to two months' imprisonment and fined \$600 for supplying opium to two women who kept opium dens. The women were also sentenced to two months' imprisonment and fined \$20 and \$100, respectively.

The "Stars and Stripes," it is supposed, were first given to the breeze by Paul Jones. The explanation is this: Congress resolved, on June 14, 1777, "that the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternated red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." On September 3d the resolution was officially promulgated, and Jones was appointed to the command of the Ranger on the same day.

After all the other married women teachers have been forced out, Miss Ira Graff, principal of Franklin School, the last of their number, will quit the New Orleans public schools voluntarily. Her retirement after twenty-five years of service marks the end of a twenty-year fight. The School Board decided that marriage destroys the woman teacher's usefulness, and a movement was launched to have only single women. During the long interval, there have been only five married teachers, and one by one these have been compelled to retire.

A time clock has been installed at Sportsman's Park, St. Louis, with the joint approval, and, in fact, under the joint direction of President Hedges and Manager Stovall, of the St. Louis Browns. Every player, be he veteran or recruit, will have to record his arrival every morning for the forenoon practice, and men who do not get into the grounds and by the time clock before one o'clock will be fined in proportion to their tardiness. One-eighth of a day's pay is the rate for every fifteen minutes' tardiness. Needless to say, some of the players rather object to this detective device, but President Hedges declares his players can kick their heads off if they wish to—but that the clock game will go despite one and all protests.

Death was faced by John Vololick for five hours in the presence of a crowd that swelled till it numbered fully 4,000 people. He awaited the rising of the tide, caught in a lock of the Congress avenue bridge over West River, New Haven, Conn. When swimming he was imprisoned by the lock and clung there, with a constantly growing crowd of onlookers unable to assist him. The Westhaven and New Haven fire departments, a large squad of police and scores of volunteer athletes came to his rescue, but could do nothing for him. Finally the trolley wrecking car arrived, lifted the lock, after part of the bridge had been cut away, and permitted him to escape from his imprisonment. The thousands of spectators cheered wildly as he was taken half fainting from his perilous position.

The U. S. Consul at Southampton, England, recently reported that the Aragon, of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, for South American waters, was armed with rapid-fire guns. The Aragon is a passenger liner and also carries great cargoes of chilled meat from Argentina. It is the first of the fleet to be armed, but it is intimated that many other ships of other lines will be armed in the same way before the year closes. This departure was made to carry out an Admiralty idea. A retired gunner is added to the crew to drill gun squads on the voyage. All naval reserve men on board who serve in these crews receive credit on their required service to hold their pay rating. The placements of the two 4.7 rapid-fire Mark VI. guns are in the poop of the ship. Effective range of the guns is about five miles. The guns are those taken out of ships sold out of the navy. To enable the deck to carry the weight of the guns and to meet the recoil heavy steel struttings were built underneath the deck, giving the same strength as an unarmored ship.

Dynamite is produced by the admixture of nitroglycerin with a silicious infusorial earth, known under the German name as kieselguhr, and in appearance looks like brown sugar. The various processes are carried on in isolated wooden buildings, about twenty yards from each other, and surrounded by massive banks of earth. Nitric and sulphuric acids having been mixed, the temperature being maintained as low as possible by cold water and compressed air, the acids are run into a large leaden tank and further cooled, when glycerin is injected by means of compressed air. This process, being one of considerable danger, has to be closely watched. The nitroglycerin now formed is drawn off and washed in an alkaline solution to remove any acidity, and is then incorporated with the kieselguhr in the proportion of 1 to 3. Cartridges, about one inch to seven-eighths inch diameter by three and a half inches long, are then made up, wrapped in vegetable parchment, and packed in boxes covered with waterproof oil paper, with instructions and cautions on them in different languages. Government regulations, both as to the storage and transport of dynamite, are stringent and restrictive.

INTERESTING TOPICS

VETERAN MAIL CARRIER'S TRAVELS.

Having traveled about 190,000 miles, Frank Wright, who carries the mails between Delaware City and Port Penn, Del., making two round trips every day except Sunday since July 1, 1893, has decided to quit.

"I suppose," Wright said, "I would have seen much of the country had I just kept going in a straight line. I could have driven by Salt Lake and Yellowstone Park, skirted Colorado and gone along through Oregon to California. Then I could have crossed to New Orleans and come home by way of Washington to see old Port Penn once more. That would have been only a starter. I have never missed a trip or a day in twenty years."

GIRL DROPS 1,000 FEET.

Leaping from an aeroplane 1,000 feet in the air when going thirty miles an hour, Miss Tiny Broadwick, 18 years old, of Los Angeles, returned gracefully to the ground, lighting as easily as a bird, achieving a feat never before accomplished in the world of aeronautics. The incident was a test of Glenn Martin's new "life boat," by the use of which, he asserts, the aeroplane will be far more formidable in war and much safer in peace.

The "life boat" is a silken parachute, weighing eleven pounds. Miss Broadwick took her seat in a device just below the lower plane and to the left of the driver. It was a trap seat. With a beautiful start and ascent, Martin soared around Griffith Field, gradually rising higher with each circle. Then a wide detour far over the rough country was made.

Martin swung the aeroplane back, and the little band of onlookers on earth saw the form of Miss Broadwick suddenly shoot from the aeroplane like a plummet. After falling 100 feet, the parachute opened and a sigh of relief went up. The descent was interesting. The girl landed in a barley field.

"This test means," said Martin, "that in the future aeroplanes can take up a scout, drop him off, and then go on."

FRANKLIN'S PAMPHLET, BOUGHT FOR SIXTY CENTS, BRINGS \$5,040.

A romance of literature was unfolded recently in the auction room. When Benjamin Franklin came to London in 1724 he found work as a compositor in a printing office. While setting up Wollaston's "Religion of Nature" he felt a revolt against some of the arguments, and thereupon wrote his own "Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain." He was then nineteen years of age. In after years Franklin regretted his precocious efforts and suppressed or destroyed most of the 100 copies of the tract. He did this so thoroughly that only two copies are known, and one of these came up in the Huth sale at Sotheby's in London.

Henry Stevens, the well known bookseller, bought this

copy for sixty cents about 1850. He offered it to the British Museum for \$5. The offer was refused. Throwing it into auction at Puttick's he was awarded with a bid of \$96 by Mr. Hotten, who acquired the tract. In the Hotten sale, 1872, the British Museum lost it again at \$99, and it eventually joined the Huth library. At the recent sale at Sotheby's the son of Henry Stevens paid \$5,040 for the pamphlet.

THE BRAZILIAN BATTLESHIP "RIO DE JANEIRO"

The Brazilian battleship "Rio de Janeiro," which was launched at Messrs. Armstrong, Whitworth & Company's Elswick yard on January 22, is at present the biggest battleship afloat, displacing as she does nearly 28,000 tons, with dimensions of 660 feet by 3 feet by 28 feet.

As originally designed she was to have displaced 32,000 tons and carried an armament of twelve 14-inch guns, but consequent upon a change of presidency the plans were altered, "considerations of every kind pointing to the inconvenience of acquiring such a vessel." Drastic alterations were, therefore, made in the specifications and the present design substituted.

The main armament of fourteen 12-inch guns is carried in seven twin turrets of 8-inch armor, all disposed along the center-line, four being on the fore-castle deck and three on the upper deck. When the first details of the ship became public it was asserted that the fourteen guns would be disposed in two triple and four twin turrets, and it was quite possible that some such idea was at one time considered.

The triple turret originated in Germany, but has never been adopted there, and in Great Britain it has always been regarded with disfavor; on that account it is not likely that Messrs. Armstrong would recommend its being installed in the "Rio" had the Brazilian Naval Commission originally decided to so mount the guns. The present arrangement allows for all the weapons to have bilateral training with a fore and aft fire of guns. A secondary battery of twenty 6-inch guns are mounted along the upper deck and in the superstructures, and of these six have axial fire, fore and aft.

The upper deck guns have 6-inch protection, while the remainder are behind shields. In addition twelve 3-inch guns are distributed over the superstructures and have a good all-round concentration of fire. Three 21-inch tubes constitute the torpedo equipment.

The "Rio's" protection consists of 8-inch water-line, lower and main deck belts. Forward, the main deck belt is 4 inches and the other two 6 inches in thickness, while aft the water-line and lower decks have 4 inches to within some 30 feet of the stern. Forward there is a 12-inch conning tower, and aft a small armored observation tower, at the mast of the mainmast.

An interesting feature of the ship is the provision of three-armored decks of 1-inch, 1½-inch and 2-inch from above downward.

INTERESTING NEWS ITEMS

CYCLE TOWED CAR SEVENTY-FIVE MILES.

John Dwar was near North Creek, Ohio, riding toward Toledo, a few days ago, when the exhaust valve in his machine broke. Toledo was seventy-five miles away, and Dwar was in a hurry to get there, so he called on W. H. Shafer, motor-cycle agent at North Creek, and asked to be towed in. With Shafer and his 5-6 horse power single cylinder at one end of a rope and Dwar at the other, they started off on the seventy-five-mile trip. Some stiff hills were encountered as well as a few stretches in bad condition, but they covered the distance in just three hours.

HERD OF BUFFALO FOUND FAR NORTH.

Fifteen herd of American bison, believed to be part of a large herd, were stampeded by John Leduc, a French-Canadian trapper, said to be the first white man to penetrate the interior of the Hay River country, who has come to Edmonton with a two-years' fur catch from the territory several hundred miles beyond the Arctic Circle. The feeding ground of the buffalo, which he reports to be as wild as those which roamed over the Western plains in other days, is between the Peace River and the Beaver Hills.

The discovery is of importance, as it confirms the belief of naturalists that a herd of buffalo exists somewhere in the unknown North. Leduc, who has lived north of the fifty-fifth parallel all his life, is emphatic in the statement that he has not confused his find with the musk-ox or the wood buffalo, seen occasionally inside the Arctic Circle.

BRITISH MOUNT GUNS ON THE LUSITANIA.

The reason why the crack liner Lusitania is so long delayed at Liverpool has been announced to be because her turbine engines are being completely replaced, but Cunard officials acknowledged that the greyhound is being equipped with high power naval rifles in conformity with England's new policy of arming passenger boats. So when the great ship, the third selected by the government for armament, next appears in New York Harbor about the end of August she will be the first British merchantman for more than a century sailing up the Lower Bay with black guns bristling over her sides.

The Lusitania, which will be an almost invaluable addition to England's merchant fleet, because not only is she so fast but of such great capacity for the carrying of troops, was originally built with her decks adapted for rifles, and the task of installing the battle guns will be comparatively easy.

It is very probable that immediately the tourist season is ended the Mauretania will be called to Liverpool, overhauled and equipped with guns. The British government is hastening the task of creating an armed fleet under the red ensign. A mailboat running to south America now carries rifles, and the Aberdeen liner Themistocles sailed out of the Thames bound for Australia equipped with the newest type of guns.

HOW GOLD LEAF IS MADE.

The gold reaches the "beaters" first in wide bars or nuggets. It must be weighed, melted, and made into inch-wide ribbons before the "beating" begins. The ribbon is then cut into inch squares and beaten with a hammer wielded by a stalwart workman. When each leaf has been beaten thin it is transferred to a mold, where it is beaten again for a period of four hours. The beating is accomplished by means of a wooden hammer weighing from seven to eighteen pounds on a sheepskin cushion resting on a granite block. The gold beaten is usually twenty-two or twenty-three karats fine. A little alloy of copper or silver is added to make it spread. It would be impossible for the beaters to handle perfectly pure gold.

Gold leaf is packed more by the aid of the breath than that of the hands. The operation of transferring a sheet of almost transparent gold leaf from one place to another is of such delicacy that it is possible to accomplish it only by a slight puff of the breath. The packers are, for the most part, girls to whom, after beating, the gold leaf is handed.

The girls lift the unshaped leaf from the mold with a pair of wooden pincers, flatten it out on a sheepskin cushion by gently blowing on it, cut it into a perfect square, replace it between the leaves of the book, and flatten it out with the breath. A "book" consists of twenty-five leaves, and a skilled girl operator can pack seventy books in a day.

TWO-ACRE FARM PAYS.

Sam McCall, an Alabama farmer, owned and farmed 163 acres for many years, and couldn't make a good living on it without working himself to death, he said. So he fenced off two acres and a backyard garden, and now he has done so well financially that Uncle Sam's agricultural department has sent out a bulletin telling other farmers how two acres, rightly farmed, will do more than 163 acres poorly tilled.

With this farm cut to two acres, McCall, who is nearly seventy-five, had more time to look after the improvement of his soil.

Little commercial fertilizer was used, but the depth of the soil was made greater by gradually breaking the ground deeper each year.

On this big farm McCall had averaged one-third of a bale of cotton to the acre. Now he gets seven bales from his two acres. And the cotton is so good that it is known locally as the "Sam McCall cotton." It brings the highest prices, and his cotton seed is eagerly bought by neighbors.

McCall raises a crop of winter oats. Corn is planted between the rows of oats in March; the oats are harvested in May, and as the stubble is turned under the land is planted in cotton.

In vacant spaces cowpeas are sown. Every foot of the two acres is used, and every foot of it is kept fertile.

McCall has averaged \$350 profit a year and supported his family off his two acres.

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JULY 16, 1913.

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ITEMS OF CURRENT NEWS

For a long time it was held that the story of the Amazons, the valiant race of women warriors, so great a favorite with the Greeks and other peoples of antiquity, was a mere poetic myth, but within recent years archæological researches have indicated that there were indeed women fighters of high rank in those remote days.

The royal household of London is greatly disturbed by the breaking of one of a pair of blue urn-shaped vases given to Queen Alexandra by the late Empress of China. The Dowager Empress of Russia, sister of Queen Alexandra, who was visiting Marlborough House, dropped the vase and broke a handle. Just after the breaking of one of a similar pair in the royal palace of Peking the rule of the imperial family in China came to an end. The vases are one hundred years old, and the late J. Pierpont Morgan offered Queen Alexandra \$25,000 for the pair.

Determined to support himself and his seven children on his earnings as a common laborer, Enoch T. Evans, fifty-one years old, of Scranton, Pa., refused to claim two fortunes amounting to approximately \$100,000, awaiting him in Wales, because he has never forgiven his father for depriving him of the pleasure of dancing when a boy. Evans is the only heir to \$50,000 left by his father, and a like amount left in trust by an uncle, but declines to touch the money, saying it can remain in Wales for his children when they grow up and he is dead. "If I lived all these years without it, I can get along the rest of my days," said Evans.

Dr. E. S. Higley, of Wellston, Ohio., in the early 80's, lent Charles Froelich \$700 with which to complete his education. Froelich, a struggling farmer's son, entered college and was graduated as a mining engineer. Soon afterward he sailed for Australia. Eight years ago Froelich, grown beyond the physician's recognition, walked into his office and repaid the \$700 with compound interest. Recently Henry K. Thorncroft, a barrister of Melbourne, Australia, came here and informed Dr. Higley that Froelich had died without relatives and had left him his entire estate, which is valued at \$1,000,000. Dr. Higley is seventy years old.

President Arthur T. Hadley, of Yale, the other afternoon, dug the first spadeful of dirt from Yale's new athletic field, which will embrace 100 acres. Upon the site will be erected a stadium or "bowl" of concrete and steel, capable of seating 61,000 persons. The new field is located directly opposite the present Yale field. The total cost of the stadium will be \$350,000. George Mason, 83, of New York, acting president of the committee of twenty-one, in charge of the field, made the presentation speech. President Hadley made a fitting response. Henry T. Rogers, 70, of Denver, chairman of the Alumni advisory board, also spoke.

Capt. S. B. Pearson, 4th U. S. Cavalry, when fishing in the North Platte River at the Wyoming-Colorado line on August 21, 1912, enclosed a note in a bottle which he threw into the stream. On June 1, 1913, ten months and ten days afterward, the bottle was found in the Atlantic Ocean, off New London, Conn., by a man who was fishing. It had floated more than 6,000 miles, 3,000 by river and 3,000 by sea. Captain Pearson, who is on leave at Fort D. A. Russell, received a letter from the finder on June 8th. The bottle, probably floated down the Platte River, into the Missouri, into the Mississippi and thence into the Gulf of Mexico, where it was taken up by the gulf stream and carried northward.

J. H. Legett, of Oroville, Cal., who has consigned a box of perfectly ripened fruit to the East, holds the honor of producing the earliest ripe peaches in the State. The peaches were grown upon land worked over by gold dredgers, the tailing piles left in the wake of the gold boats being leveled. The fruit sent East was perfectly ripened and was large and luscious. Last year the earliest Tokay grapes in the State were produced on this ground. The orchard has attracted widespread attention among horticulturists. There was no soil placed upon the rock. The early ripening fruit is ascribed to the fact that the rocks retain the heat. With the rocks is as much soil as there was in the first place, the rocks now being on top and the soil at the bottom.

A couple of years ago there was unearthed a sepulcher in that part of Italy known as Etruria, in which was discovered a war chariot of bronze and iron, wherein was crouched the skeleton of a woman. About this skeleton were the remains of rich robes and ornaments of gold and ivory, such as, in the old traditions, the Amazons wore in battle. The bronze-work and the terra-cotta vases fixed the date of the tomb as about 800 B. C. The first stories of the Amazons assigned them to the northeastern part of Asia Minor, but Etruria was peopled from Asia Minor and had attained a high degree of skill in certain of the arts long before Rome was founded. Such evidence as this tomb affords is, in the opinion of more than one authority, more convincing than the pictures of Amazons on the old vases, or such legends as that of Queen Penethesilea, who was said to have led five thousand women fighters to the aid of Priam during the Trojan War.

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

FINDS CAN OF OLD COINS.

Ed. Warmouth when making excavations for a concrete walk in the rear of the new residence of Mrs. Matilda Duncan in Hazlewood, Ind., dug up a rusted tin can which was found to contain \$26 in silver money. The coins were of the denominations of fifty cents, twenty-five cents, twelve and one-half cents, dimes and half-dimes. There was one Spanish coin the size of a half-dollar, dated 1774.

GETS LETTER MAILED FIFTEEN YEARS AGO.

William S. Hymer, of Gillette, Wyo., has just received a business letter which was mailed at Terry, S. D., December 13, 1898. It was addressed to him at Jacksonville, Fla., where, at the time it was mailed, he was serving in the Second United States volunteer cavalry, otherwise known as Torrey's Rough Riders.

The letter was accompanied by a statement from the Post Office Department explaining that in cleaning up the records of the dead letter office it had been discovered.

MOTOR CAR BUILT IN AN HOUR.

The speed with which a motor car could be built was demonstrated before the Society of Automobile Engineers of America when it visited a Detroit factory recently. Guests of the society included a delegation of the Institute of Automobile Engineers of England. The President of the English society, T. B. Browne, of London, was told to mark a cylinder as he was passing through the machine shop. This he did.

When the party had finished the tour of inspection and was preparing to depart, Mr. Browne was surprised to discover the cylinder he had marked in the car that was to carry him to a hotel for luncheon. The car had been built and was running under its own power in less than an hour.

JAPS SWARMING IN HAWAII.

More than half of the population of Hawaii is composed of Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans, according to statistics of the Thirteenth Census not heretofore made public. Of the total population of 191,909 the Japanese numbered 79,675, or 41.5 per cent. Japanese, Chinese, and Koreans combined numbered 105,882, or 55.2 per cent. From 1900 to 1910 the Japanese decreased 15.9 per cent.

Caucasians in the Hawaiian Islands numbered 44,048, being 22.9 per cent. of the total population. Of these 32,301 were Portuguese, 4,990 Porto Rican, 1,990 Spanish, and 14,867 of other Caucasian descent. Pure Hawaiians numbered 26,041, a decrease of 12.6 per cent. in the ten years. Of the Japanese males 21 years old or more, numbering 41,718, only 11 had become naturalized. Of the foreign-born male population of Hawaii, 21 years or older, 9.19 per cent. were Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.

More than half of the entire population cannot speak English, the highest portion being Korean, 81.7 per cent., and only slightly lower among the Japanese, 79 per cent.

Statistics of occupation and the ownership of homes are not included in the report.

GAME IN KANSAS

A Santa Fe train recently killed an antelope west of Cimarron, in Gray County, Kansas. "It was one of several which ran across the track as the train approached," said Lou Endicott, who was a passenger on the train, to a reporter. "I travel a good deal out in southwestern Kansas and have seen quite a number of antelope this past winter. They are not as common as they used to be, however."

There are some deer down in the Rock Island country in the brakes of the Canadian River, south of Guymon. Not many antelope are left. The deep snows and extreme cold of the winter 1911-12 killed off many. Yet fifteen or twenty-five years ago antelope were numerous all over the prairie to the north and south of the Beaver, in fact, all through the original Beaver country.

B. B. Quinn, writing of the wild game and animals that until a few years ago were plentiful around where Liberal and Guymon stand now, says:

"Not longer than fifteen years ago there were a few wild horses to the west of us on the plains of Cimarron County. Twenty-five years ago the herds of wild horses ranged all over this section of the country and in the Panhandle of Texas and a number of men made it a business to walk them down and capture the animals, after which they were offered for sale. But the herds decreased, and with the coming of domesticated herds the owners of the latter looked upon the wild animals as a menace, particularly the stallions, and these were shot at every opportunity. Sometimes saddle horses or domesticated mares would get with the wild bunch and in a few weeks would become almost as wary as the members of the original band.

"The typical wild horse was not of much value, though at a distance, with long manes and tails, they often presented a splendid appearance, but occasionally some splendid specimens would be found among them.

"Gray wolves disappeared along with the wild horses though several years after Guymon was founded a lobo or gray wolf was killed and brought to town.

"Twenty years ago it was no uncommon occurrence to jump a bunch of deer in this section of the country, particularly in the sand hills, beginning at the mouths of the Coldwater and running eastward on the north side of the Beaver. There are still a few deer on the South Canadian, seventy-five miles south of this point.

"The last herd of wild buffalo, something like sixty head, ranged fifty to seventy-five miles west or southwest of this point, but these were slaughtered in 1886 or 1887 by Buffalo Jones, Lee Howard, and others, who killed the older animals and captured the calves to be domesticated. For several years after the extermination of this small herd a number of local ranchmen had one to four or five buffaloes in their possession, but these were disposed of in some manner, either died or were sold to live their allotted time in some city park. Perhaps the only four-footed animals left of the original prowlers of the plains are the coyote and the jack rabbit."

JAPANESE TWIRLER.

A wonderful imported paper novelty. By a simple manipulation of the wooden handles a number of beautiful figures can be produced. It takes on several combinations of magnificent colors. Price, 10c., postpaid.

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A mystifying and amusing trick. Tin blanks are placed under the little tin cup and apparently coined into dimes. A real money-maker. Price, 20c.

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A handsome ring connected with a rubber ball which is concealed in the palm of the hand. A gentle squeeze forces water or cologne in the face of the victim while he is examining it. The ball can be instantly filled by immersing ring in water same as a fountain pen filler. Price by mail, postpaid, 12c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

TRICK FAN.

A lady's fan made of colored silk cloth. The fan may be used and then shut, and when it opens again, it falls in pieces; shut and open again and it is perfect, without a sign of a break. A great surprise for those not in the trick. Price, 35c. by mail, postpaid.

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Ayvad's Water-Wings



Learn to swim by one trial

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These water-wings take up no more room than a pocket-hankerchief. They weigh 3 ounces and support from 50 to 250 pounds. With a pair anyone can learn to swim or float. For use, you have only to wet them, blow them up, and press together the two ring marks under the mouthpiece.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ITCH POWDER.



Geo whiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It will make him scratch, rear, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 16 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

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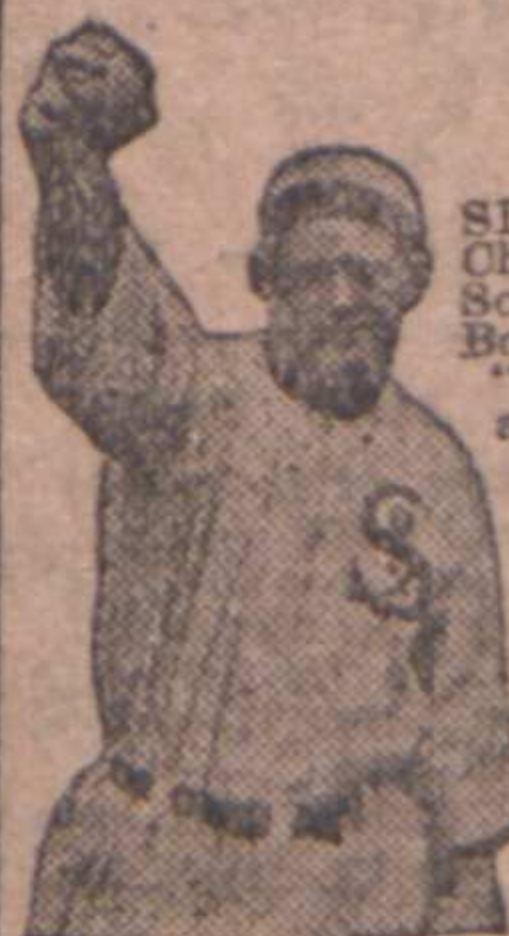
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This pencil is made up in handsome style and looks so inviting that every one will want to look at it. The natural thing to do is to write with it, and just as soon as your friend tries to write, the entire inside of the pencil flies back like a jumping jack, and "Mr. Nosy" will be frightened stiff. It is one of our best pencil tricks and you will have a hard job trying to keep it. Your friends will try to take it from you. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

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WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE INK BLOT JOKER.



Fool Your Friends.—The greatest novelty of the age! Have a joke which make everybody laugh. More fun than any other novelty that

has been shown in years. Place it on a desk, tablecloth, or any piece of furniture, as shown in the above cut, hear some valuable papers, or on fine wearing apparel. Watch the result! Oh, Gee! Price, 15c. each, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

SNAKE IN THE CAMERA.



To all appearances this little startler is a nice looking camera. The proper way to use it is to tell your friends you are going to take their pictures. Of course they are tickled, for nearly everybody wants to

pose for a photograph. You arrange them in a group, fuss around a little bit, aim your camera at them, and request the ladies to look pleasant. As soon as they are smiling and trying to appear beautiful, press the spring in your camera. Imagine the yell when a huge snake jumps out into the crowd. Guaranteed to take the swelling out of any one's head at the first shot.

Price 35 cents, by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

ELECTRIC PUSH BUTTON.



The base is made of maple, and the center piece of black walnut, the whole thing about 1 1/4 inches in diameter, with a metal hook on the back so that it may be slipped over edge of the vest pocket. Expose to view your New Electric Bell, when your friend will

push the button expecting to hear it ring. As soon as he touches it, you will see some of the liveliest dancing you ever witnessed. The Electric Button is heavily charged and will give a smart shock when the button is pushed.

Price 10c., by mail, postpaid.

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THE MAGIC DAGGER.



A wonderful illusion. To all appearances it is an ordinary dagger which you can flourish around in your hand and suddenly state that you think you have lived long enough and had better commit suicide, at the same time plunging the dagger up to the hilt into your breast or side, or you can pretend to stab a friend or acquaintance. Of course your friend or yourself are not injured in the least, but the deception is perfect and will startle all who see it.

Price, 10c., or 3 for 25c. by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

THE MAGIC CARD BOX.



One of the best and cheapest tricks for giving parlor or stage exhibitions. The trick is performed as follows: You request any two persons in your audience to each select a card from an ordinary pack of cards, you then produce a small handsome box made to imitate pebbled leather, which

anyone may examine as closely as they will. You now ask one of the two who have selected cards to place his or her card inside the box, which being done, the lid is shut, and the box placed on the table. You then state that you will cause the cards to disappear and upon opening the box the card has vanished and the box found empty. The other card is now placed in the box; the lid is again closed and when the box is opened the first card appears as strangely as it went. Other tricks can be performed in various ways. You may cause several cards to disappear after they are placed in the box, and then you can cause them all to appear at once. You may tear a card up, place it in the box, and on lifting the cover it will be found whole and entire. In fact, nearly every trick of appearance and disappearance can be done with the Magic Card Box. Full printed instructions, by which anyone can perform the different tricks, sent with each box.

Price, 20c. by mail, postpaid.

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